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Devotional Commentary on the Gospel Narrative

VOLUME III.

OUR LORD'S NATIVITY



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BY THE

REV. ISAAC WILLIAMS, B.D.

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NEW IMPRESSION

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"As in mines of gold, any one who is skilled in such matters, could not bear to overlook even the slightest vein, inasmuch as it is capable of yielding great riches; so in like manner in the Divine Scriptures, we cannot pass over one jot or one tittle without loss; but it is necessary throughout to investigate all things. For all these things are spoken by the Holy Spirit; nor is there in them any thing which is superfluous."—CHRYSOST. in Joan. Hom. xxxvi.

*"The day's departing light was shed,
The Evening Star glow'd saffron red,
The chief Disciple set the sail,
His anchor loosed, and watch'd the gale—
And now had left the shore behind,
When night came on with rising wind,
And from the bottom wrought the sea,
All darkly and tempestuously.
Then on the black and midnight sky
Arose th' affrighted seaman's cry;
With creaking mast, and cables torn,
No hope,—but death and wreck forlorn.
Then pale and breathless with affright!
Christ they behold, in tranquil light
Walking upon the watery spray,
As if upon a marble way.*

*"Then awe-inspired in dread amaze
Upon th' unwonted sight they gaze;
Peter alone unblanch'd by fear
Beholds the Lord of Heaven is near,—
The Lord of earth and Heaven and sea,
Whose omnipresent majesty
To winds and waters gives commands,—
And stretches forth beseeching hands.
Christ with benignant sign to save
Bids him come forth upon the wave;
And Peter His commands obeys:
But now on the tempestuous ways
His faltering steps begin to fail,
He sinks—the watery deeps prevail.*

*His God, with kind reproof severe,
His weakness chides, which without fear
Could not the stormy waves withstand
And follow Christ. By His right hand
Supported now, and gently led,
His footsteps on the billows tread,
He walks on ocean's stormy bed.*

*“ Thus have I dared my boat unmoor,
Leaving the safe and tranquil shore
Of silence, and have set my sail
On seas where dangerous tongues prevail:
Not like great Peter on the sea
In goodness and fidelity,
But one whom frequent faults each day
Would merge like sea-weed in the spray,
Conscious myself of night indeed,
And life which I in darkness lead;—
To loose my boat on seas profound,
While stormy tongues are gathering round
Which soon might sink the fragile bark
Of one unskill'd and in the dark.
Do Thou, omnipotent to save,
Stretch forth Thy hand, and o'er the wave
Guide me to Thee, safe 'mid the swell
Of adverse tongues that round me dwell,
That, step by step, held by Thy hand,
I may upon the billows stand.”*

PRUDENTIUS. *Præf. Lib. Post. in Sym.*

ADVERTISEMENT

THE passages of Scripture which are the subject of the Commentary are printed in Italics. Our English version has not been adhered to, nor have the different Gospels commented on with the chapter and verse been noted ; because it has been always intended that the Commentary should be accompanied with the Text in our authorized English version, harmonized and arranged in parallel columns, which now has been done in a separate volume¹. By comparing them with the “HARMONY” it will be seen that the whole of the Gospels appear continuously in these volumes, and are made in order the subject of the Commentary.

¹ A HARMONY OF THE FOUR EVANGELISTS.

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PART I

The Birth at Bethlehem

“O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength ; lift it up, be not afraid ; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God !”

SECTION I

THE PREFACE OF ST. LUKE

“**F**ORASMUCH *as many have attempted to compose a continuous narrative concerning the matters which are fully believed among us*” (Luke). As many are called, but few are chosen ; as many enter into the visible Church, and receive the saving truths delivered to us, and seek in some measure to arrange their life in order according to that Divine teaching ; yet but few are found to endure unto the end ; so out of many who made the attempt to arrange the full narrative of those wonderful treasures that are scattered in the world, of the sayings and actions of Christ, four only, according to the preordained number appointed of God, were chosen to stand as the four pillars of His Temple. We receive indeed the narrative of events and persons merely human with all those

various imperfections of truth to which men are themselves liable ; being in themselves fallible, so also is the record of all things appertaining to them. But it was meet that He who is Truth Itself should remain in record to all ages, not only by witnesses chosen of God, but by the Great Witness Himself speaking in them, inspiring them that wrote, and them that read, with all truth. Many therefore have put forth spurious narratives, requiring that seal of the Holy Ghost which is stamped on the words of Christ. The Church is built from the beginning on four pillars ; the many fall away, but the four remain. " Heresies have many Gospels," says Origen, " the Church but four only." The numbered four are set apart, and sanctified, and inspired with all fulness of grace and truth. Many were the false Prophets among the Jews, and rejected by faithful men as adulterated coin, says the fore-mentioned writer, for the gift of discerning spirits was among the people ; but some were true. So the Church of God acknowledges four Gospels only as true, out of many that were spurious. Such was that entitled according to Thomas, and that according to Bartholomew, and that according to the Twelve Apostles, and that according to the Egyptians, and one composed by Basilides, the heretic. Others too were there, since the writing of St. Luke, who, with perhaps good intent, sought to enter in and were not able : who may have attempted to build, but were not able to finish : who built on the earth without a foundation, and were not able to stand. " I looked for his place, but, lo ! he was gone." The four remain, as the pillars of that House which is founded on the Rock.

The term by which he expresses their full belief or acceptance of those truths is remarkable, although of frequent occurrence in the New Testament, and apparently not

found elsewhere in exactly the same sense. It seems to imply the full persuasion and assurance of faith, which is attained both by notices of external circumstances and by internal conviction; such a combination of reason and faith as is strongly seen in the blessed Virgin, "comparing things spiritual with spiritual." Thus the term is used of Abraham, that he was "fully persuaded that what God had promised, He was able also to perform¹." And "let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind²." Thus Origen here explains it, as implying things known of those who are "grounded and settled in the faith," immoveable, and without wavering, in a conviction not arising from the senses, but from faith and reason.

"These matters," says the Evangelist, "which are fully believed among us, *even as they have delivered them unto us, who were from the beginning eye-witnesses, and ministers of the Word.*" He speaks of these truths as being then received, before there existed substantiated written documents of the same; received either from traditional accounts, or from their being promulgated by Apostolical teaching. The Apostles themselves would exactly correspond with the description here given of the persons from whom they were received; for the qualification required for that office by the Holy Ghost was, that they should be of "those who have companied with us," i. e. the Apostles, "all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us; beginning from the Baptism of John, unto that same day that He was taken up from us." From the expression, however, it is evident, as Origen says, that St. Luke received his account from eye-witnesses: and also, as Theophylact observes, that St. Luke himself was not of that number.

"*It hath seemed good to me also,*" he proceeds, "*having*

¹ πληροφορηθείς, Rom. iv. 21.

² πληροφορείσθω, Rom. xiv. 5

accurately traced out all things from the very first, to write to thee in order, most excellent Theophilus." Here it is remarkable that the inspired Evangelist says nothing of his Divine inspirations, or of his commission from God to this office, as the Prophets often do in the Old Testament: but, on the contrary, he seems to refer the reasons of his writing to the purposes of a human will; and he attributes the means of his information to human sources. Nor, indeed, does he ever allude to that higher sanction which is usually supposed to have stamped his Gospel, the superintendence of St. Paul, who received his own knowledge of the Gospel by a direct revelation from Heaven. On the contrary, he seems to assign the means of his information to something less than the ocular testimony which other Evangelists enjoyed, to his accurate instruction in the testimony of others: and the object too is humble and limited, that one person, the Theophilus for whom he writes, may be more fully instructed. Now this it is in which "the Kingdom of Heaven" upon earth differs from the older dispensation; that it takes up and consecrates common things to deepest mysteries of faith, not superseding human and humble instruments, but adopting and elevating them with the breath of that which is Divine. And this, its inspiration of God, is known of this holy Book by the voice of the Church from the beginning,—a voice from behind saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it;" for his "praise in the Gospel is in all the Churches." In like manner, not even did Christ declare Himself; but often concealed His Divinity under common human things: and if this Evangelist writes only to one man, Theophilus, so also did Christ often in speaking to one,—a scribe, or a leper, or by name to Peter, to Thomas, to Zaccheus,—instruct hereby all His Church. Thus also the Epistles of

St. Paul are to Timothy, and to Titus, and to Philemon, yet not the less addressed to us all. For the Church Catholic, like her Divine Master, generalizes not, but deals with individuals, with each one separately, as if there were none else, but all in one and one in all : far different from the world ; “ For it is not the will of your Father which is in Heaven that one of these little ones should perish.” The appellation indeed attached to Theophilus, “ most excellent,” or “ most noble,” is the same as St. Luke records as used by St. Paul both to Felix and to Festus³, and seems to indicate that the person addressed was one of worldly consideration ; and therefore appears to sanction the use of terms so applied. But whether this Theophilus be a real person, or merely, as the name imports, one “ beloved of God,” all of us, as Origen beautifully observes, if we are such as to be beloved of God, shall be Theophiluses, and they to whom this Gospel is addressed.

It is certainly remarkable that the Evangelist seems here to ascribe his information to a source distinct from that of St. Paul ; for one cannot but suppose he must have had his co-operation and sanction. Indeed, Eusebius states, that St. Luke is said to have received his Gospel from the preaching of St. Paul, as St. Mark from St. Peter ; and St. Chrysostom notices that there is a resemblance in the style of these two Evangelists to that of their respective masters ; St. Luke flowing as St. Paul ; St. Mark sententious as St. Peter. However that may be, in the Acts of the Apostles we certainly have St. Paul’s teaching in the very words of St. Luke ; and there seems great reason to believe that the Epistle to the Hebrews is the writing of St. Luke, at the dictation of St. Paul.

The words of the Evangelist, of his “ writing in order,”

³ Acts xxiv. 3 ; xxvi. 25.

seem also to have been too strictly interpreted ; for he does not mean that he does on all occasions adhere to the exact order in which things were done or spoken ; but the expression is to be understood more generally, for the orderly narrative of our Lord's life from the earliest period to His Ascension, in distinction from detached notices of His sayings and 'life ; such as were perhaps common. For the term is peculiar to St. Luke, and used by him in this sense. But his expression of "accurately tracing out from the very first," is of course peculiarly descriptive of his Gospel ; and it may be that in this he alludes to information from the Virgin Mother herself. It has indeed been suggested, that on this account St. Luke has been represented as the Painter of the portrait of the blessed Virgin ; from his delighting to speak of such things as might form a subject for a painter ; and from the Lord's Mother having been herself the means of his information. Certainly, he introduces those early events, of the birth of the Baptist and our Lord's early childhood, in a way that no other Evangelist does ;—circumstances which could have been known to no human narrator so well as to Saint Mary herself, and which she with adoring wonder must have ever after delighted to contemplate.

And here the Evangelist proceeds to lay down the very end and object of inspired Scripture ; "*that thou mayest know the certainty of those things, in which thou hast been instructed,*" or, as it signifies, in which thou "hast been catechized" by word of mouth. The use therefore of the written Word is as the test and evidence of the truth of those things which have been before taught by oral tradition : nor is this merely spoken of one period, but as the words of the Holy Ghost, always fulfilling and being fulfilled, it is as a law of the Church throughout. For

as a matter of fact, so far as the Truth is received it is thus received, even unto this day; of the doctrine of the Trinity we are acquainted by Tradition, and this doctrine then becomes the key to the Holy Scriptures; of the Sacraments, and of the New Sabbath of the Lord's day, we are instructed from childhood; and after having been so instructed we find "the certainty of these" in the Scriptures; or, at all events, the foundations on which they are built.

There is a passage in the Prophet Isaiah, which Eusebius, St. Jerome, and others, have considered to be spoken of St. Luke, and characteristic of his Gospel. "I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering. The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned." The clothing of the Heavens with sackcloth is descriptive of the Sacrifice of Christ which pervades the Gospel of this Evangelist, and of that penitence connected with it of which he so much speaks. His is "the tongue of the learned," inasmuch as he is considered to have had more human learning, and a more classical style of writing than the others. And speaking "a word in season to him that is weary," may well describe "the beloved Physician" whose Gospel is characterized by compassion, and has been called of old the medicine of the sick or languishing soul. And the early waking "morning by morning" may speak of his own early beginning in the knowledge of the truth, or from his tracing his Gospel peculiarly from its early commencement. This renders his Gospel the most suitable introduction to the narrative composed of the four sacred Writers.

SECTION II

THE ANGEL APPEARING TO ZACHARIAS

THE stream of inspiration had now ceased for about four hundred years ; while human events went on developing themselves in a new order of things : and the books of less plenary or doubtful inspiration, which intervene in our Scriptures, indicate that there existed deep heart-stirrings in men's minds, and yearnings after something more spiritual than their early religion had found in them. Moreover, the sufferings of the captivity had had the effect, if not of purifying that people, yet of turning their minds to that Law, for the neglect of which they had suffered. It was as "the silence in Heaven for half an hour," before the Angels went forth with the trumpets, and the four had sounded : while suspense and expectation were looking forward to the more immediate coming of that Deliverer, Who had been promised from the foundation of the world : indistinct surmises of some one rising from the dead, and of that Prophet to be raised up from among their brethren, of whom Moses had spoken, instead of the Voice from Mount Sinai, which they entreated to hear no more. And the words with which the Inspired Writings had closed were remarkable, both from their distinct declaration, and for the very mysterious manner in which alone it could be fulfilled. As the silence of night came on, and the light of prophecy was going down, it spoke of the rising of "the Sun of Righteousness" "with healing in His wings ;" and yet not so for all men, but for them shall He arise "that fear My name." To this it is added, "Behold, I send you Elijah the Prophet, before the coming of the great and

dreadful day." And although all this was wrapt in such obscurity, that none could foretell the mode of Christ's appearing ; yet the line in which He would be found, and the mode and condition of finding Him, was marked out by the words that prefaced this declaration : "Remember ye the law of Moses My Servant." It was then according to those legal ordinances that the forerunner was to be, who was to call to the fulfilment of the Law of Moses, and in that fulfilment Christ Himself to be found. As therefore our Scriptures terminate with the repeated declaration of Christ's second coming, "Behold, I come quickly ;" and our eyes are in consequence turned to the expectation of that event ; so had the minds of the Jews been at that time to some coming of Elias, and this connected with the injunction of their remembering the Law of Moses ; when at length in the Temple, in the line of the Priesthood, and in the fulfilment of legal ordinances, the event now to be recorded took place.

The throne of David had to all appearance ceased from the eyes of men, of which it had been said, "his seat is like as the sun before Me." For in the place of that Royal line there was an ambitious and tyrannical usurper, a scion from Edom, who was there placed by the Romans with the name of king, and shadow of royal authority. But the appointed ministrations in the Temple were still observed, and performed by the Priestly line ; and although the office of the High Priest itself had become but an annual Roman appointment, yet among the Priests themselves were persons who acted up to the Law which they had received ; some who in their connexions adhered even to the higher course pointed out by the Law, of marrying with the daughters of Aaron. And this was the highest praise of that legal Priesthood ; for the virginal Priesthood

of Christ's kingdom, bearing and bringing up spiritual children unto God was not yet revealed. But all this is left to be the fruit of our meditation in the simplicity of the Evangelical narrative. "*It came to pass in the days of Herod, the King of Judea,*"—for Herod the Great was called "the king" in distinction from his sons, among whom the kingdom was divided, under the name of tetrarchies ;—"there was a certain Priest, by name Zacharias, of the ward of Abia." It is called Abijah in the Chronicles, being the eighth course out of the four and twenty which David had appointed : the eighth number seems ever to imply the coming in of the Kingdom, as the number seven was the Jewish period. "*And his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.*" Although the marriage of Priests with the other tribes was allowed, yet this was the better and more honourable course ; she was not of the tribe of Levi only, which would have been well, but of the family of Aaron, the more noble among them. Nor was it in this only that they adhered to the righteousness of the Law. "*They were both righteous in the presence of God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord without blame.*" They were directing their conduct, not to the approbation of man, who judges from the external deportment, but to the all-seeing eye of God, as being in His Presence ; so as to have been well pleasing to Him in their righteousness, as Origen, Ambrose, and others explain it ; walking before God, as being of that circumcision which is inwardly in the Spirit, "whose praise is not of men, but of God." Thus St. Paul said of himself, "touching the righteousness which is in the Law, blameless." For although in some sense, none are without sin, and none are righteous before God, yet in some sense also, "he that is born of God sinneth not."

And as Christ shall "present unto Himself a glorious Church without spot;" therefore they who compose it must be without spot; we must be righteous before Him, "without spot and blameless."

Such is the account of the parents of the Holy Baptist; of honourable stock, their office the service of God, their lives holy. Such were his parents: and according to the Law, posterity, even unto thousands, are blessed for their parents' sake.

To this spot, therefore, might turn with comfort the eyes of those who were looking for redemption in Israel; thither were they directed according to the last injunction of the closing volume of God, "Remember the law of Moses." But for themselves, so far as they walked by sight and not by faith, when they carried their views forward, the door of hope seemed to be closing upon them. "*And they had no child, inasmuch as Elisabeth was barren, and both were now far advanced in their days.*" Yet faith, which "against hope believeth in hope," would not have despaired, for those who wait for God, and are of blameless life; and by comparing things spiritual with spiritual it might have been observed, that at all times when things appeared to human eyes the most dark and gloomy, the nearer were the deliverances of God; at such times most of all broke forth the bright beams of His Gospel, Who came at midnight from the grave. As Christ was to be born of a woman contrary to nature; so after faint similitudes to His marvellous Birth, had holy women of old obtained power to conceive beyond nature; and saints of God were born of parents barren and advanced in years. Such was Isaac, born of Sarah when old and childless; and Joseph, of Rachel; and Samuel, of Hannah, who was also barren; and Samson, of the barren wife of Manoah: much

more than might the nearer approach of Christ send such power before Him, that His forerunner should be born of parents aged and barren. For nothing in Scripture is altogether sudden and new ; but there are as it were glimpses or gleams of light going before the perfect day, or as shadows, more or less distinctly seen, foretelling an approach.

“And it came to pass, that as he was executing the Priest’s office in the order of his daily service in the presence of God, according to the custom of the Priesthood, it was his lot to burn incense when he entered into the temple of the Lord.” For according to the appointment of David, all these things were assigned by lot, leaving it as it were to the decision of God ; thus the land was divided to the tribes by lot⁴, and Achan was taken by lot⁵; and the same is carried on in the New Testament, where the number of the Twelve was filled up by lot⁶. It was therefore Divinely ordered in the appointment of God, that he on this great occasion was to burn incense. *“And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the hour of incense.”*

These words, of his entering into “the temple of the Lord,” and of the people “praying without at the hour of incense,” naturally suggest that it might have been on the great day of the Atonement, when the High Priest once a year went into the Holy of Holies ; and the adaptation of the occurrence to that great day would be so very striking, that it renders one very ready to catch at any intimation that it might be so. The account of its observance is given in the sixteenth chapter of Leviticus ; first of all of the incense, “that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy-seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not:”

⁴ Numb. xxxiii. 54.

⁵ Josh. vii. 18.

⁶ Acts i. 26.

and then follow the directions for the "sin offering," to "make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness and transgressions of the children of Israel;" "and there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation, when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy place, until he come out." And to the lengthened and particular details of this, it is added that it was to be by "an everlasting statute." The higher fulfilment of the same we find in the Revelation, "there was silence in Heaven about the space of half an hour," and the Angels are then seen with the trumpets; and before they "prepare themselves to sound," an "Angel came and stood at the Altar having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all Saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne." And the spiritual meaning is evident of the whole, that it signifies Christ entering into the Holy of Holies, or the Heaven of Heavens, having made an atonement, and there to intercede for us; while we also stay without, and, according to the well-known description, "fall down to the earth to worship the Lord God Almighty"; for the prayers of the saints ascend together with the incense. And the interval before Christ's return is ever represented as a short time, for "half an hour," and a time of prayer and humiliation; His Church, during that interval, being emphatically called "the House of Prayer." In the meanwhile there is "silence in Heaven:" there is no further revelation of God's will now going on until the end. And our Lord Himself, we may observe, speaks of His kingdom, as the fulfilment of the day of the Atonement at His first preaching at Nazareth.

In apparent allusion to this, St. Chrysostom says,

⁷ Ecclus. i. 17.

“Zacharias entered into the temple to offer prayers for all, as if a mediator between God and man.” And St. Ambrose, who considers Zacharias as the High Priest, and this as the Day of Expiation, says, “Into the second tabernacle once a year the High Priest alone entered, not without blood, which he offered for himself and the sins of the people. This is that High Priest who is sought for by lot: for the true One is yet unknown.” And again; “if, therefore, in the type no witness could be introduced, what else was signified, but that that Priest was to come, whose Sacrifice should not be common with the rest; Who, in fine, should not sacrifice for us in temples made with hands, but should abolish our sins in the Temple of His own body?” Bede also seems without hesitation to suppose it the great day of the Atonement. Certainly the present occasion would be a wonderful, though subordinate, fulfilment of that Legal institution; the great day of the Atonement, the High Priest gone in white garments into the Holy of Holies; and where should an Angel appear but in such a place, the figure of Heaven itself, and by the Altar and the Mercy-seat: when Sacrifice is made, and he is engaged in the great prayer of Intercession made once a year, and signified by the Incense; and when the people also without are praying? And what could be the object of their united intercessions, but for the coming of Christ? what else was suggested herein by the Law, and all Legal circumstances attending it? Well might the scourge of the captivity be requisite to call them back to the fulfilment of that Law, which contained within it things so great.

But still this interpretation is not sufficiently borne out either by authority, or by any thing in the account itself.

³ Exp. in Luc. lib. i, 23.

There is no allusion to its being on that very great and high occasion. Zacharias is not spoken of as the High Priest, but rather one would suppose in distinction, "a certain Priest⁹." Add to which, that the Angel appears by "the Altar of Incense ;" and it appears from Exodus¹, that this, the "golden altar of incense," stood *without* the veil, that Aaron was to burn incense thereon every morning and every evening. And it appears from Leviticus², that on the Day of the Atonement coals were to be taken in the "golden censer" from that altar, and carried "*within* the veil." It might indeed be said in answer to these objections, that nothing can be argued from the mere silence of Scripture, or absence of express designation: that in the great irregularity and profanation to which the High Priesthood was then brought, its duties may have been performed by lot, as well as those of others. It is said that the last High Priest, Hyrcanus, was also king, and slain by Herod the Great, whom the Romans made king: both he and they would be jealous of the office of High Priest, and some years after, it was an annual Roman appointment: its duties therefore at this time *may* have been performed by the Priestly body by lot. And with regard to the "altar of incense," it might be said that the word thus translated³, is not unlike that which in the Epistle to the Hebrews is translated "the golden censer⁴," which St. Paul there specifies as being "after the second veil." To which it may be added, that the termination of both these words in Greek usually signifies place, whereas the word for censer in the Septuagint is different; and that if this word in the Hebrews signifies the place, or altar of

⁹ ἱερεὺς τις.

¹ Exod. xl. 5. 26 ; xxx. 1. 6, 7.

² Levit. xvi. 12.

³ θυσιαστήριον.

⁴ θυμιατήριον, Heb. ix. 4. τὸ πυρεῖον, Levit. xvi. in LXX.

incense, it might be by this that the Angel appeared, and therefore within the veil. Add to which, that in the Revelation, "the golden altar⁵" of incense is spoken of as "before the throne of God," and one would suppose within the Holy of Holies.

But perhaps this fulfilment would not have that propriety which we imagine, and would rather distract than further our views of the higher mystery contained in that the great day of Expiation,—of Christ Himself entering within the veil. And we may acquiesce in the commonly received interpretation of that burning of incense every morning and evening, on the altar before the Mercy-seat. Indeed, the Altar for Sacrifice in the outer court of the Temple has been well supposed to signify mortification of the flesh; and the offering up thereby of the outer and animal man: while the Altar of Incense within, represents those prayers and devout contemplations of the spirit which ascend to Heaven, and enter "into that within the veil."

"*And there was seen by him an Angel of the Lord, standing on the right side of the altar of incense.*" At the right side of the Altar, as on the right side in the Holy Sepulchre, did the Angel appear: and on the right hand of the Power on High does Christ stand, and show Himself to His first martyr, St. Stephen. He appeared on the right hand of the Altar, because bearing, and being himself the signal of Divine mercy, "for the Lord is on my right hand, therefore I shall not fall." "*And Zacharias was troubled, when he saw him; and fear fell upon him.*" Ever fearful in the sight of sinful man must be the manifestation of that which is holy, or which comes from the Presence of God; our nature, conscious of sin, must

⁵ τὸ θυσιαστήριον τὸ χρυσοῦν. Rev. viii. 3.

ever tremble at whatever breaks through the veil from the unseen world. Thus of the Angel that appeared to Manoah and his wife, although a messenger of good, yet it is said that his "countenance was very terrible;" and Manoah said, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God⁶." And of an Angel that appeared unto Daniel, he says, "My comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. Yet heard I the voice of his words⁷." No wonder, therefore, that the first words of Angelic appearances to man should so often be, "Fear not." At our Lord's Resurrection, the first words of the Angel that appeared are, "Fear ye not;" for "trembling and amazement," and "fear" possessed them⁸; though his words were of consolation. Thus to Abraham God appeared in a vision, saying, "Fear not, Abraham." To Jacob, also, and to Hagar, and to Gideon, and to Daniel, the Angel says, "Fear not;" and to Joseph also, and to Mary, and to Zacharias, and to the Shepherds also, and to St. Paul, and to St. John in the Revelation. So natural is fear to man as a guilty being, with any thing that brings near the unseen: "for even thereafter, as a man feareth, so is Thy displeasure." It is by the instrumentality of Angels, for it is their especial delight, to lessen this fear, which we, as lying in sin, are subject to: for the lot of the guilty is described as fearing, "where no fear was." Which fear is only done away in Christ: and no doubt this, the usual address of Angels, arises from the circumstance that they are so often represented as ministering to the Son of Man in His kingdom; for it is He that in all His approaches to human nature seems to say, "Fear not, it is I."

"And the Angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias,

⁶ Judges xiii. 22.

⁷ Dan. x. 8, 9.

⁸ Mark xvi. 8.

for thy prayer is heard." Thy sacerdotal prayer (as Augustin considers it), for the Atonement of sins, for the coming of the Messiah, and the transgressions of Israel : but even for himself also might that prayer have been, for that prayer of the High Priest alone on the Day of the Atonement, was "for himself, for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel⁹." Thy secret prayer also for thyself shall have part in the fulfilment of the same ; thy prayer, perhaps of old for children, or thy prayer even now for grace and mercy. "*And thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son ; and thou shalt call his name John,*" implying one given by the grace and favour of God, or a gracious one, bearing God's favour : well therefore may it be added, "*And there shall be joy unto thee and gladness ; and many shall rejoice at his birth.*" Great is the attention in Holy Scripture to the giving of names ; not only had the Patriarchs names given, or changed, according to Divine appointment, as that of Israel ; but some had names Divinely appointed before their birth, as Isaac, and Samuel, and Ishmael, and Josias (to say nothing of our Lord Himself above all) : and the giving a name among the Prophets was equivalent to Divine designation. Great, doubtless, and deep, the mysterious significancy contained in this giving of names ; and, like prophecy itself, it seems to ordain and mark out something in their future life and fortunes. The Greeks also, ever catching at glimpses of truths higher than they knew from the same sacred source, are continually dwelling on the sound and syllables of names ; as something mysteriously containing great destinies. Such is familiar to us in their poets¹.

"For he shall be great in the presence of the Lord ;"

⁹ Lev. xvi. 17.

¹ Æsch. Agam. 690.

yea, so great that our Lord Himself bears testimony, that "among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist;" and who has been greater than he who baptized Christ, and was His immediate Forerunner, and "the friend of the Bridegroom," and who "heard His voice"? And he shall be as the Nazarites of old, of whom this separation is appointed²; "*and wine and strong drink shall he not drink. And he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.*" As if with some mysterious reference to Sacramental grace, wine is often put in contrast or comparison with the Spirit; "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;" and Eli thought of Hannah that she was drunk with wine, and the Jews of the Christians that they were drunk with wine, when they were filled with the Spirit. Yea, Christ Himself was called "a wine-bibber;" and, if it may be added with reverence, "inebriations of the Spirit" is a common term with the Fathers, from the Septuagint, and the Vulgate version of the Scriptures. Thus shall he be filled, it is said, even from the mother's womb, as if in allusion to some secret predestination of God, as in the birth of Phares and Zarah, and the preference of Jacob to Esau. Something to this effect is often spoken of the Prophets of God; as of Isaiah, "The Lord that formed me from the womb to be His servant³:" and of Jeremiah, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations⁴." And St. Paul also, though called so late, was "separated from" his "mother's womb⁵." Yea, and even more than this

² Num. vi. 3.³ Is. xlix. 5.⁴ Jer. i. 5, and Ecclus. xlix. 7.⁵ Gal. i. 15.

would it mysteriously seem of John, for even in the womb of his mother did he leap for joy at the salutation of Mary, as if already spiritually hallowed for the herald. Without the Spirit, the Jews beheld Him not in His mighty works: by the Spirit, John, as yet unborn, acknowledged the presence of the unborn Saviour. "He had not yet," says St. Ambrose, "the spirit of life, but he had the spirit of grace. And in other instances we see the grace of sanctification precede the substance of life. For the spirit of this life is one thing, that of grace another: the one hath its commencement at birth, its decease at death; the other is not restrained to times or ages, is not extinguished by dissolution, nor shut out from the mother's womb. The holy Mary when filled with the Holy Ghost prophesied: the dead body of Elisha kindled to life a dead man by its touch; and Samuel, after death, as Scripture testifieth, 'foretold things to come'.⁶" *"And many of the children of Israel shall he turn unto the Lord their God."*

"And he" himself *"shall go before Him, in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers unto the children."* Before Him whom all hearts expect, shall he proceed as a herald in His presence: and he is described in the very words with which the Old Testament ends, as none other than that great Forerunner who is there spoken of. As he was to live as a Nazarite, in that appointed separation from the existing race of the Jews, he would not partake of the spirit of the age, and the manifold degeneracies of the people; and therefore his doctrine will have the effect to restore again in their children the faith of their father Abraham, and the true fulfilment of the Law of Moses, and the spirit of their father David, and in

⁶ Expos. in Luc. lib. i. 33.

so doing, shall by this reconciliation bring down upon the children the blessings promised to their fathers. "And" thus shall he convert "*the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.*" These last words distinctly explain the office and the peculiar teaching of the Baptist; not that it was to declare the Name, and point out the Person of Christ, so much as to render the people ready to accept Him, and capable of discerning Him at His coming.

Perhaps this yet future coming of Elias, before Christ's last Advent, may be found in the Ancient Church being restored in that of the latter days: the fathers and the children being thus reconciled, in the spirit of austere discipline and severe repentance. Indeed the office of the Baptist, in some mysterious manner, may be fulfilled even now, and always unto the end; not in Churches only, but in individual members also. On this subject, Origen has the following remarkable sentiments; speaking of John as the forerunner of Christ, not only to the living, but also to the dead, he says, "I think that the sacramental mystery of John may be fulfilled in the world, even unto this day. That the spirit and power of John precedes as the forerunner into the soul of him who is about to believe in Christ Jesus, and prepares a people made ready for the Lord, in the rough places of the heart makes ways smooth, and straight paths. Not at that time only are the ways prepared, and paths made straight; but even to this day, the spirit and power of John precedeth the coming of the Saviour. O the mighty mysteries of the Lord, and of His dispensation! Angels" (or Messengers) "precede Jesus: Angels every day either ascend or descend for

the salvation of men in Christ Jesus!⁷ St. Ambrose also beautifully expresses the same reflection. So wonderful indeed are the ways of God in their manifold developments; so much do things and persons recorded, set forth in visible representation and type the spiritual things that are hidden, and the secret ways of God in the heart of man, that this thought may be but the glimpse of some vast truth and analogy in the spiritual kingdom of God.

Such was the sublime and wonderful annunciation of the Angel. "*And Zacharias said unto the Angel, How shall I know this; for I am an old man, and my wife far advanced in her days?*" Something has been said of the exalted condition of Zacharias, as one of so noble and priestly a family, so honoured in station and privilege, and in life so just and blameless: but worldly greatness is weakness in Christ's kingdom. Not only were the wise and the great for the most part unbelievers; but even in the most accepted among them there was a weakness of faith and timidity, as in Nicodemus, in Joseph of Arimathea, and others, and perhaps even in Zacharias a want of perfect faith. In the answer of the blessed Mary was the modest and humble inquiry of a spotless Virgin; in the laugh of Sarah was delightful surprise with wonder, scarce believing for joy, laughing at that incongruity whereby reason and faith were both overwhelmed. But in the Priest there is something of doubt, like that which in St. Thomas requires a sign; and therefore was the sign granted with something of gentle reproof. He was reasoning for want of faith, but the holy Virgin was reasoning upon faith. His very words imply a reasoning from natural causes against faith,

⁷ Hom. lv. in Luc. ad fin.

the contrary to which we read of Abraham, "he considered not his own body now dead, . . . neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb⁸." Yet not that the very words intimate altogether unbelief, for Abraham asked a sign, and Moses also, and so did Gideon, and were accepted, and the blessed Mother makes inquiry; and Ahaz was reprov'd for not requiring a sign in dissimulation of unbelief. It depends therefore entirely on the temper of mind in which a sign is either asked or declined. Certainly St. Augustin, Theophylact, and the general consent of antiquity, consider that in Zacharias doubt was thereby implied in the eyes of the all-seeing God. And as of course a doubt argues some question of what the Angel himself might be, to this, the thought of his heart, the reply of the Angel is first directed: "*And the Angel answered and said unto him, I am Gabriel, who stand in the presence of God,*" not only an Angel, but one come from God's immediate Presence, one of those who "always behold the Face" of the "Father which is in Heaven," who have especial love for Christ's little ones; the same who was sent to Daniel to announce to him the coming of Messiah, the Prince. "*And I am sent to speak unto thee, and to bear thee these good tidings. And behold, thou shalt be silent, and unable to speak, until the day when these things shall take place; because thou believedst not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.*" His silence therefore was not only a punishment but a sign, a sign for which he asked, granted in mercy to him; but yet a punishment, for it were more blessed not to have needed such a sign. "*And the people,*" who were praying without, "*were expecting Zacharias; and wondered that he continued so long in the temple.*" This seems to indicate an

⁸ Rom. iv. 19.

unusual continuance there, more than what is recorded will account for ; perhaps he might have been overcome by the vision and unable to move from thence ; or what passed with the Angel may have been more than what is here recorded. Thus also, when our Lord hath entered into the Heaven of Heavens, to us who are without in waiting, shall He appear to be delaying His coming : and men shall say, "Where is the promise of His coming?"

This the Priest's coming out of the Sanctuary was of itself an object of no little solemnity, and described at length with such exquisite beauty in Ecclesiasticus*, as if replete with something great and prophetic. "How was he honoured in the midst of the people in his coming out of the sanctuary ! He was as the morning star in the midst of a cloud, and as the moon at the full : as the sun shining upon the temple of the Most High, and as the rainbow giving light in the bright clouds." "Then he went down, and lifted up his hands over the whole congregation of the children of Israel, to give the blessing of the Lord with his lips. . . . And they bowed themselves down to worship the second time, that they might receive a blessing from the Most High . . . that He would confirm His mercy with us, and deliver us at His time !"

But how different was it on this occasion, when the fulfilment of all these things drew nigh ; "*And when he came forth he could not speak unto them : and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he was making signs unto them, and remained throughout speechless.*" Thus the Priest was himself a type of the Jewish nation, in which speech had ceased ; as now also before the coming of Elias there is silence in

* Eccus. i. 5. 24.

the Church; and as in Zacharias faith fails. In the manifold wisdom of God perhaps this silence answered also other ends; for thus was it brought about, that the vision and the coming of the Baptist should not be revealed before the time, while the people were awakened to a holy awe and inquiring hope, but the distinct object of it was hidden from them. Thus his silence is in Divine wisdom made eloquent.

Origen explains this silence of Zacharias, as signifying the silence of Prophets among the Jews. Even unto this day it may be said of them, that they are "making signs," and beckoning as Zacharias, but remain deaf and speechless. Their religious rites are as mute signs, for which they can afford no reason, as they believe not. For what is circumcision but a mute sign, for which they cannot express the cause? What is the Passover but a mute sign, of which, if you ask the reason, they are speechless¹? St. Ambrose also to the same effect: "Zacharias therefore remained speechless, and was beckoning to them: it was but a certain bodily act without a word, labouring to intimate but not expressing the will, a certain speechless discourse of the dying, with voice suppressed in the extremities of death. Does not the Jewish people resemble this case; so bereft of understanding, that they are unable to assign a reason for their actions, as one who in the last departure of vital hope hath lost the voice which he had; who cannot find utterance, but by the last act of the failing body is desirous to set forth some sign of speech, but not speech itself²?" Both of these writers intimate that as Moses who declared himself at first void of speech, but afterwards manifested himself by word and

¹ In Luc. Hom. v.

² In Luc. lib. i. 41.

deed, was a type of the Jewish nation beforehand, so also was Zacharias afterwards.

"And it came to pass, that when the days of his ministration were fulfilled, he departed unto his own house. After these days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying, Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein He looked on me, to take away my reproach among men." These are much the same words as those of Rachel on a like occasion³; and the promise of removing barrenness was one of the blessings God pronounced to His people, if obedient⁴; and barrenness was inflicted as a punishment on the house of Abimelech⁵, and is so spoken of by the Prophet Hosea⁶, "give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts." But still, as if leading to faith beyond and above the Law, in like manner, as temporal blessings were promised, yet the Saints of God were most afflicted; so though barrenness was to them a curse, yet holy women were barren, Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, the mothers of Samuel and of Samson, Anna, and Elisabeth. It may be observed, that in the words of this favoured Saint there is that faith which attributes all things to God, but no allusion to the greatness of that son whom she was to bear; from her husband's want of speech she may not have heard it. But there is seldom an argument that can be founded on the silence of Scripture; it often but incidentally alludes to, sometimes is entirely silent respecting great truths, contained in the circumstances it records. And the reason for her concealment is not stated; but we find before the birth of Samson that the Angel gives injunctions to the wife of

³ Gen. xxx. 23.

⁵ Gen. xx. 18.

⁴ Exod. xxiii. 26; Deut. vii. 14.

⁶ Hos. ix. 14.

Manoah before the birth⁷, "because he was to be a Nazarite to God from the womb;" and therefore by the positive injunction of God, or from legal or natural piety, separation from the world was incumbent or suitable. Indeed, retirement for devotion was but the natural conduct in such a Saint of God; all great mercies, as great afflictions, dispose the heart to solitude and approaches to God. Thus in the Revelation, the Woman travailing with child fled into the wilderness from the face of the serpent. Or it may be from a sense of modesty, at the very strangeness of that conception in her old age, as indeed St. Ambrose considers it. And the place of her retirement was probably in those mountains of Judah, or the wilderness, as they are called, which were afterwards the retreat of the Baptist: for we find that subsequent to the time here specified, when the five months had passed, Mary visits her in the hill country.

But whatever great and mysterious doctrines may be contained in these things, whereby the Saints of God are consecrate to Him, and formed by Him in the womb, they doubtless contain religious obligations to us. That parents even before their birth are by separation and devotion to labour for the sanctification of their children. For as it is the curse of Eve to "conceive in sin," and to "bring forth in sorrow," such a time is a season for mortification and prayer for the removal of that curse; and also for the preparation of their own hearts to the right bringing up of their children, whose eternal well-being has been made by God to depend so much on their parents.

⁷ Judges xiii. 7.

SECTION III

THE ANGEL APPEARING UNTO ST. MARY

Nothing appears more wonderful to a reflecting mind, than the little indication there was on the surface of society at large, respecting these most amazing circumstances. The world went on as usual, neither heeding nor hearing of these things that moved so deeply below. The Highest gave His voice; the depths were troubled; deep called unto deep; but the surface was unruffled. Yet still the event that had occurred had been in a place, and among persons of no mean note, in Jerusalem, and in the Temple, to persons eminent in that sacred nation, of a Priestly family, and of more than Priestly origin. But otherwise was it with what follows: the throne of David had passed from the sight of men, but not from the eyes of the all-seeing God, nor had His promises been forgotten. For when God speaks of the seat of David being "like the Sun," it is not before men, but "before Me;" it is in the sight of God that it is ever present; and it is "as the faithful witness in Heaven," for the Rainbow, though given by an everlasting covenant, and depending on unalterable laws, yet appears not always in the sight of men, but only when God wills; when He looks on the tears of mankind, then comes forth the emblem of His covenant*. Very far from the scene of the former circumstances, in a country proverbially contemptible and poor, and in a village contemptible even in that poor country, there was a maiden of the Royal stock of David; but not on

* Ps. lxxxix. 35, 36; Isa. liv. 9.

that account of any consideration to attract notice or regard. We cannot well conceive her according to the imaginary portraitures of painters, with all the freshness and bloom that is lovely in human eyes; but rather in deportment as one of unsullied purity, of watchful devotion, of austere and penitential holiness. But these are not such things as would have drawn upon her the eyes of the world, in a condition of great obscurity and lowliness. Far different therefore from the aspect in which we now behold her, as the Mother of Him who is our God, in the eyes of all men and Angels so highly exalted above all of human race, and it may be among the creations of God, that it is difficult almost for our thoughts to dwell upon her without wonder and reverence approaching to adoration. And therefore she has been mercifully drawn into the shade, and covered, like Moses, by the overshadowing Hand of God. Her watchings, her fastings, her prayers, her pursuits, her thoughts, words, and deeds of exalted faith; her birth and her childhood; the house wherein she dwelt, and the persons, if any, to whom her influence extended; and the attendant circumstances of this interview; whether it was at a well, as holy women of old; or, as is most supposed, in the secret chamber: all these things are alike wrapt in the silence of the grave, even as the grave of Moses, of whose sepulchre "no man knoweth unto this day." She is hidden with her and our God. Well indeed for us, and blessed be God that it is so, however marvellous and full of Divine wonder the contemplation of her! It is but a development and part of a great principle seen in all the dealings of God, Who is ever hiding that which is good and Divine from the eyes of men, as unworthy to behold it. Even now

may there be one of a meeker sex, with spirit bowed down, and clothed in the humility of prayer, with whom the Spirit of God so dwells, that her prayers have more influence on the affairs of the world, than all the studies of the wise and enterprises of the great. In whatever way these circumstances may have been, we may well suppose her living in privacy and obscurity, and occupied in the solitude and silence of devotion; and little expecting the sudden interruption of events so wonderful, and the appearance of one so great, when the following narrative proceeds.

"In the sixth month" after his appearance to Zacharias, or rather after the conception of Elisabeth, *"the angel Gabriel was sent,"* not any angel, but one of the highest of all, and Gabriel, i. e. the Fortitude of God, to declare God Himself, coming to engage and contend with spiritual wickednesses in high places. And in the sixth month, for after six days of toil the Sabbath ensues, and "after six days" was the Transfiguration of Christ; after six days the voice of God was heard in the mount; Elisabeth had been six months in a situation representing the travail of the world, and the yoke of the Law, when Christ comes. And it may be that six thousand years will be the duration of the world's travail, when Christ returns. All creation groaning and travelling in pain had waited for this hour: Expectation from the foundation of the world had eagerly bent before, watching for the opening of this door; Faith from the beginning hath had her eyes on the horizon, watching for the gleam of light which is now breaking. But simplicity of narrative ever in holy Scripture attends on the introduction of circumstances of infinite sublimity and majesty. *"In the sixth month the Angel*

Gabriel was sent *from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a Virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the name of the Virgin was Mary.*" There are evident reasons why it should be to a Virgin "espoused;" for thus the mysterious economy of God would prevent a thought of scandal even before men, "providing for things honest also in the sight of men;" as Abimelech said of her husband unto Sarah, "Behold, he is to thee a covering of the eyes." "The Lord preferred," says St. Ambrose, "that men should cast a doubt on His own origin, rather than on His mother's purity." "So that the virginity of the holy Mary was not only of untainted purity, but also of unblemished reputation. For it becometh the saints to have a good report of them that are without^p." The same writer, together with Origen, also alludes to another reason, mentioned first by St. Ignatius, that our Lord's birth of an immaculate Virgin was a secret unknown to the devil, and that this circumstance had the effect of keeping it so. The supposition is highly interesting in this point of view, that it turns our thoughts to things infinitely surpassing the wisdom of man in the reasons that regulated the Divine economy. St. Ambrose moreover suggests a type and mystery in this circumstance: he observes that her being "betrothed and a Virgin is a type of the Church, which is married yet immaculate. A Virgin hath conceived us of the Spirit. A Virgin brings us to birth without a groan."

"And the Angel entered in unto her and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured! The Lord is with thee! Blessed art thou among women." Surely, never to mortal

^p Exp. in Luc. lib. ii. 1.

before was salutation like this. To Daniel, indeed, in the midst of his humiliations and confession the same Angel appears, and says, "Daniel, greatly beloved!" To him also and to Gideon there is a salutation given by the Angel, "Peace be unto thee¹!" Such indeed may be forms of worldly salutation, and as man speaks to man, the superior to his inferiors; as Boaz to his reapers, "The Lord be with you²!" but although they may be worldly forms, yet when spoken from God, they are "not as the world giveth³," but as Christ pronounces, and in pronouncing gives, "peace." But these words to the blessed Virgin have something in them even more than salutation, something that sounds of gracious and awful admiration, "Hail, thou highly favoured!" or "thou that art full of grace!" as it is in the Latin. "To Mary alone," says St. Ambrose, "was this salutation reserved. For she alone is well said to be full of grace, who alone hath attained such grace as none other hath done, to be filled by the Author of grace." Such words of exaltation might well fill with consternation the meek and virginal spirit of one whose humility was according to her unspeakable greatness. For in every example throughout Holy Scripture, humility is in proportion to the faith, and according to the acceptance with God. "*And she when she saw him, was troubled at his saying; and was reasoning of what nature this salutation might be.*" Thus also at the last Day, those who are accepted of God, are represented as almost doubting that high acceptance, from the sense of their unworthiness, as drawing back with something of reverential fear. "Lord, when saw we Thee an

¹ Dan. x. 19; Judges vi. 23.

² Ruth ii. 4.

³ John xiv. 27.

hungred, and fed Thee ? or thirsty, and gave Thee drink ?" as if from profoundness of humility, unable without questioning to apprehend their greatness. It is moreover worthy of notice, that no sooner is St. Mary mentioned, than we have an instance of that thoughtfulness which so often appears in her, and is perhaps the most marked feature in her character. This reasoning on matters of faith and Scripture may also be traced through the hymn of the Blessed Virgin. Such is seen in the highest instances of faith, as in St. John, when he saw the linen clothes lie, and reasoned with himself and believed. Ancient writers compare and contrast this obedience of the Blessed Virgin with the conduct of Eve ; as Irenæus, Ambrose, and Tertullian. And now indeed, as well as at our Lord's Passion, was the higher fulfilment of the mysterious words, "let us make man in Our Own Image," and also of the devil's false promise, "ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil⁴." Wonderful indeed is it to reflect with the Fathers, how Satan was hereby overreached. So that although by the sin of Eve man in his pride is to himself as a God, and labours to be as God, and comes thereby to know evil ; yet through the Seed of the blessed Virgin is he elevated to the right hand of God, to be in Christ as God, and to know also the good, the infinite goodness of God.

But all is not well between us and Heaven, and fear ever awakens at tidings from thence. "*And the Angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God: and, behold, thou shalt conceive in the womb, and shalt bring forth a Son, and shalt call His name Jesus.*" The Name above every name, at

⁴ See The Passion, p. 240.

which every knee shall bow: the Name given of God, and which, therefore, conveys the gift of all the Name implies: and which is prophetic of the life and character of Him on whom it is bestowed. So even the expression "they shall call," or "He shall be called," in the sacred idiom indicates the thing itself designated by the word, as spoken by Him "Who calleth things that be not, as though they were." For His declaration that it shall be, is equivalent to the performance, and conveys the thing signified: and therefore "no word shall be impossible with God." Nothing impossible for Him to say, and there is nothing that He can say, but the thing shall be. Thus, words are with God equivalent to things, and things to words, for they also speak His language.

"*He shall be great:*" such is the simplicity of the words that speak of His infinite power, and Godhead, and salvation; which speak of Him, of whose greatness "there shall be no end." "Go up to Heaven," says Origen, "see there how His greatness has filled the heavenly places; carry thy thoughts down to the deep, behold, there too He has descended. If thou seest this, then beholdest thou fulfilled in very deed, He shall be great⁵." "*And He shall be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David.*" Thus long before the Nestorian heresy arose, and the Council of Ephesus had cut off that error from the Church, this passage of itself declares the one undivided nature of Christ, confessing, as St. Irenæus observes⁶, that this same Person, who is the Son of the Most High, is also the Son of David. The Evangelical Prophet, in the same manner, combines the two throughout the whole of his wonderful descrip-

⁵ Aur. Cat.

⁶ Iren. l. iii. 18.

tion. For he seems alternating, as it were, from Heaven to earth, from God to man; and combining the two in intimate union; when he says, "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, . . . from henceforth even for ever⁷." Indeed, the very first words with which it is stated imply the same, for He is the "Child" of Mary, but the "Son" of God. It is to Him, as such, that God shall give all authority and power, and "put all things in subjection under His feet;" as is so often declared of His Resurrection and Ascension. "All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth;" that is not of course as God;—for as such He says, "before Abraham was I AM," equal to the Father in power and glory—but as God and Man, overcoming the powers of darkness, and exalted far above all principality and power. Thus shall all the promises made to David be fulfilled—in man indeed, yet not after a human, but after a Divine manner, and surpassing the thoughts of man.

"*And He shall reign,*" it is added, "*over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom shall there be no end.*" "The house of Jacob" indicates the twelve Patriarchs and twelve tribes; and the twelve tribes signify the whole world, or the spiritual Israel; for the number twelve signifies perfection, the fulness of the Christian Church. Thus Isaiah speaks of the stranger as "calling himself by the name of Jacob," and "sur-

⁷ Isa. ix. 6, 7.

naming himself by the name of Israel." Even to the house of Jacob after the flesh is His kingdom preached; and then in the deeper fulfilment does it pass to that house of Jacob which is composed of "Israelites indeed," and the true children of Abraham. For as Christ is first preached to Judah, so is He also to the ten tribes that are scattered abroad: for as lost in the world, when the world is preached to, they also are called into the kingdom; and thus St. James, in writing to all composing Christ's kingdom, greets "the twelve tribes scattered abroad." The sea of Baptism in Christ's Temple is set on the twelve sacrificial oxen of the house of Israel. Those that are sealed in the Eternal City are of the twelve tribes. Thus is His kingdom without limit and without end; for all things in Him are true, of which earthly things are but the shadows. His sceptre "is a right sceptre," His kingdom a true kingdom, in comparison with which all others are but unreal.

The very words intimate something infinitely exalted of the Messiah, such as the Prophets indeed expressed, but the Jews knew not; and the faith of the blessed Virgin already takes hold of the mysterious greatness of His words: for as one espoused to Joseph, she might, humanly speaking, have supposed that it was to be one naturally born of that union; but her thoughts are arising above such a human interpretation to something infinitely holy and pure. "*And Mary said unto the Angel, How shall this be, since I know not a man?*" Her question arises from the greatness of her faith, not from the want of it. She doubted not in unbelief, as all Catholic writers agree, but inquired of the mode, for she knew it not, and could not tell, unless it was declared

to her. For, in asking how it was to be, she expressed her belief that it was to be. And, indeed, the unbelief of Zacharias in that which was beyond nature, enhances by the contrast the faith of the Virgin in that which is contrary to nature. She had, perhaps, read that a Virgin should conceive, and believed; but how a Virgin was to conceive, she had not heard, and knew not. But, as Gregory Nyssen beautifully observes, "the tables of our nature, which guilt had broken, the true Lawgiver has formed anew to Himself from our dust creating a body capable of taking His divinity, which the finger of God hath carved, that is to say, the Spirit coming upon the Virgin⁸."

"And the Angel answered and said unto her, *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the Power of the Most High shall overshadow thee; wherefore also that Holy Thing which is born of thee shall be called the Son of God.*" "The Power of the Most High" appears equivalent to the former expression, "The Holy Ghost," as in other places, and in the Doxology at the end of the Lord's Prayer. But St. Chrysostom, Theophylact, and Gregory, say that the Power of the Most High is Christ Himself: and it is well supposed that the terms, "the Most High," "the Power," and the "Holy Ghost," speak of the Three Persons in One God; as is also set forth at His Baptism. The term "overshadow" is often in Holy Scripture applied to God's Power, as "Hide me under the shadow of Thy wings," "in the shadow of His hand hath He hid me." If we may say it with reverence, it expresses that image which our Lord has taken to Himself⁹, "as a hen" by the warmth and protection of her wings overshadowing brings her offspring

⁸ Aur. Cat. St. Luke, Ox. tr.

⁹ Matt. xxiii. 37.

to the birth. And thus, in this our Lord's birth, is there a resemblance to that of Christians at Baptism, "who are born not of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God:" and this was set forth at our Lord's Baptism, by the Spirit's overshadowing as of a Dove, and the Voice from Heaven declaring the Son of God. It has before been noticed that the blessed Virgin seems a type of the Church, as married, yet a virgin, an immaculate Bride "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing," yet bearing children unto God: and perhaps in this also, that the holy Mary, though married to one, yet conceived not by him, but bore supernaturally: as the Church to external appearances is joined to the world by its visible and temporal Priesthood, but in reality is filled with Spirit and with Grace. Thus in the Revelation, though we doubt not "the woman clothed with the sun" to be the Church, yet it contains an apparent allusion to the Virgin Mother, for "she brought forth a Man Child, who was to rule all nations." "*Born of thee*," says the Latin and English translation; and although the words "*of thee*" are not found in the Greek, but only "*that Holy Thing which is born*;" yet the expression "*of thee*," is not without Scriptural authority. For this, as St. Basil observes, is what St. Paul says, that God sent His Son born, not through or by a woman, but "*of a woman*," signifying thereby communion of nature with us. And St. Athanasius, "we confess It to be of the nature of man, and a most real Body, the very same according to nature with our own body. For Mary is our sister, since we are all descended from Adam." But the expression "*that Holy Thing*," indicates that in this He differs from all man-

¹ Rev. xii. 1.

kind, that He is born Holy ; for David in lamenting his uncleanness says, "in sin hath my mother conceived me:" but this conception being infinitely holy and pure, and therefore unlike that of all mankind, He is in this place called "that Holy Thing:" being Holy as no child of man is holy.

But the Angel, to support and strengthen her faith for an event so infinitely great, and to afford the information due to her, adds a sign close at hand in one of her own kindred ; and the circumstance confirms what has been said of the barrenness of holy women being typical of the Virgin state of our Lord's Mother. He mentions not, says St. Chrysostom, Sarah, or Rebecca, or Rachel, which were the more ancient examples, but one more near home, and a fact then approaching. "*And, behold, Elisabeth thy kinswoman ; she herself also hath conceived a son in her old age ; and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible.*" "Was called barren" of course merely signifies she that was, and was known to be so, as this word has been before explained : and this fact is given as a confirmation of that Almighty Power which can do all things for them who believe, with Abraham, that "what He hath promised He is able also to perform." All things are possible with God, as St. Augustin explains it, excepting those things to be able to do which would be an indication not of power but of want of power, and to be able to do which would be not to be Almighty. For "it is impossible for God to lie."

"*And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord ; be it unto me according to thy word.*" Behold the handmaid of the Lord, that is to say, one that is His and not her own. All thought of self is lost in God, there is no

reflection of herself, but as belonging unto Him, as His property, His handmaid and servant; having no will but His will; as passive in Him. There is no instance of ready obedience, of devout acquiescence, of entire resignation on record more beautiful than this. Great is that humility which speaks not of itself, or speaks of itself only to condemn and deprecate. But greater is that humility which passes on from thought of self altogether, and is able to speak of self without self-reflection or self-esteem. Thus St. John can make mention of himself as the "beloved disciple," and St. Paul can speak of himself as not behind the chiefest of Apostles, though he be nothing. So does the blessed Virgin lose herself in the thought of God and of His service. Humility and faith, although thinking themselves unworthy of the least of God's mercies, yet they shrink not from the magnitude of "the Unspeakable Gift." This wonderful greatness, together with the wonderful littleness of our nature, is the greatest mystery in the complex nature of man, a combination in itself inexplicable, and the source of numberless contradictions in morals: yet both of them are at the same time realized by faith: both find rest in Him Who is both God and man; and the most humble of men. The Heathen moralist had caught a glimpse of this great truth, though it filled his system of Ethics with inextricable difficulties, when he made "greatness of soul" the crown of his virtues, and the chief point in his perfectly wise and good man to be, that he should deem himself capable of great things, and yet that this high sense of his own capabilities should not be beyond the truth². This was the very point in the faith of Abraham, when first his home and country,—and then an earthly

² Arist. Ethic. lib. iv. iii.

Canaan, and then the child of his old age, and all things temporal—were trivial to him; while in profoundest humility he looked to the greatest things which God could bestow, thinking of nothing less than God Himself, his “exceeding great reward.” So was it with the faith of all the Saints of old, as described in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews; they sought “a better country,” they “looked for a City that hath foundations,” they despised the pleasures of sin, looking for “greater riches,” and as “seeing Him who is invisible.” Thus the spies who were rejected, and the children of Israel, deemed themselves incapable to contend with the Anakims, and unworthy of the good things which God had promised. Thus the Jews afterwards had very low ideas of what they might attain through Christ: judging themselves “unworthy of everlasting life³,” thinking of nothing higher than of that kingdom which the Romans could take away: like the unprofitable servant in the parable, like Lot who could not escape to the mountain of refuge, like Judas who could not raise his desires beyond thirty pieces of silver. Thus also with those accepted of Christ in the Evangelical narrative, their humility and their faith were only equalled by the greatness of their requests. They that asked little had little faith, and received but little: they that asked much had much faith, and received much. Thus the Centurion, thus the Canaanitish woman, thus the penitent thief: they asked and received great things. As Origen, in his Treatise on Prayer, records it as a saying of our Lord’s, “ask for great things, and small things shall also be given you.” So mysteriously are humility and faith combined: for if God gives grace to the humble, how

³ Acts xiii. 46.

humble must she have been who was pronounced "full of grace:" if faith alone can receive great things of God, what must her faith have been who was thus privileged?

"And the Angel departed from her."

SECTION IV

MARY VISITING ELISABETH

THE feelings of the blessed Virgin upon the departure of the Angel, her fear, her love, her self-abasement and devotion, are all hidden from our view in that Divine care which hath veiled her from human sight. But the intelligence of the Angel fills her with a holy interest for another, who was in some degree a partner with herself in being made an instrument in the wonderful works of God, which had been kept secret from the foundation of the world. Feelings of overwhelming joy and fear will ever seek for a vent: there was one only with whom she could rightly communicate respecting these mysterious circumstances: and in the condition to which she was now raised, to visit her rather than be visited by her, was a part of humility and charity. The distance was great, about a hundred of our miles; but distance and time seemed annihilated in the greatness of the things which were now coming to pass; and in which they were to bear so signal a part. It was not the birth of a king, nor the gaining of a kingdom, but the secret with which her bosom was labouring, was something infinitely higher than any thing of which a human breast had ever yet been made the receptacle. She knew it not; for it surpassed her thought; but in adoring faith and

wonder, she was as one of those happy spirits to whom it will be said at the last Day, "enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Still as she proceeds in thought, she is lost in the sublimity and depth of the immensity of that mystery, and the more overwhelmed in her own lowliness and nothingness as she advances more profoundly into its immeasurable depths. And perhaps the way she had to go, over that wild and mountainous tract, was in itself soothing to a spirit thus full. It was the time of spring, when all nature, which had been made from the beginning to typify and prefigure this event, was harmonizing with her condition; in signs of Him Who is the true Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world; Who is Himself the Resurrection and the Life. All nature was conceiving and bringing to birth, and in the gladness that pervades all sights and sounds in the wild natural world, it would seem as if the curse itself denounced on the ground was suspended; or that all things gave indications that it would be overcome. It was the season when light, day by day, is mastering the darkness, and the lengthening days seem to indicate a time, when in the true Light there would be perfect Day, and "no darkness at all." The circumstance itself of this visit, thus disclosed by the narrative of St. Luke, breaks forth as a light amid the clouds that envelope that period of the sacred history, and seems to disclose the figure of the blessed Virgin herself, hastening over the mountains.

"And Mary rose up in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda: and entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth." But from the Evangelist let us turn to the Prophet (for here also is the Virgin type of the Church): "O Zion, thou that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the

high mountain;—lift up thy voice with strength, say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God.” “Break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob.” “Sing, O Heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains; for the Lord hath comforted His people!” “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings⁴!” In the lighter strains of the Latin Hymn—

Ye mountains, bend ye low,
O'er which the Virgin flies,
To whom the starry skies
Would their glad summits bow.

In maiden fear conceal'd,
Long hid in quiet home,
She now abroad doth come,
With charity her shield.

She flies without delay,—
She flies from human eyes,—
Not to be seen, she flies,
And fears lest aught betray.

Blest earth, whereon she trod,
Put forth your fragrance sweet;—
Blest hills that felt her feet,
The mother with her God!

More blest ye friends, whose guest
She now doth silence break,
Of heavenly things to speak,
And where her footsteps rest!

She rose up, and hastened to the mountains: she arose, “not as incredulous concerning the oracle,” says

⁴ Isa. xl. 9; xliv. 23; xlix. 13; lii. 7.

St. Ambrose, "nor uncertain about the message, nor doubtful of the example; but as rejoicing in the fulfilment of her wishes, full of piety, and hastening for gladness, she proceeds to the mountains. For whither but to those things that are above should she hasten who is filled with God's?" The expression of her "rising up," as in the Prophet Jeremiah, seems to signify great zeal and earnestness, as "rising up early and sending them," "rising up early and speaking," "rising early and protesting." And together with the word "hastening," indicates something of great zeal in her character, which, like that of St. John the Evangelist, seems to combine great fervour with pensive contemplation. "The grace of the Holy Spirit," says Ambrose, "knows not slow endeavours." It was at the call of duty she hastened to one sanctified to God's service, and now in travail. "She before," says the same writer, "was dwelling alone in inmost sanctuaries, but maiden modesty now stops not her call abroad, nor roughness of mountains her zeal, nor the length of journey her duty."

Deep was, doubtless, the thrill of reverential awe and joy, when the aged Elisabeth found her, whose holy feet had touched her threshold; nor was it merely the human feeling of devotion, however fervent; for He Who "despised not the Virgin's womb," already was manifesting His awful presence. Through all the Prophets that had gone before, and through all the Jewish state, and through all the sufferings of creation labouring and travelling in the mighty womb of nature, there had been joyful anticipations and gleams of His Coming, blending joy and mercy with sorrow and judgment; so that, although the curse of sorrow had passed

⁵ Expos. in Luc. lib. ii. 19.

on the world, yet even that curse of sorrow was alleviated by prophetic anticipations, and an instinctive consciousness of His Approach. And in like manner now did the great Forerunner, feeling the nearer coming of Christ, prophesy while yet unborn: as the Law of old, Divinely prescient and inspired beyond reason, and as the Prophets of old rejoiced to see the day of Christ, saw it afar off and were glad. "*And it came to pass that when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the Babe leaped in her womb.*" And surely meet and significant was the circumstance, as predictive of the coming of that kingdom whose mysteries are revealed unto babes; into which none shall enter but they who are as little children. And as the children in the Temple celebrated Christ's coming, though they knew not what great things it portended; and their prophetic gestures were accepted by Him, Who "out of the mouths of very babes and sucklings hath perfected praise:" even so now was the child delighted at coming into being, feeling already (as Lazarus in the grave) the gladness of His presence Who is the Resurrection and the Life, Who knew and beheld him in the womb. "Thine eyes did see my substance yet being imperfect. How dear are Thy counsels unto me! O how great is the sum of them!"

The sacred mother also of the Prophet was herself filled with the Holy Ghost, "Who no doubt," says St. Augustin, "revealed unto her what the exultation of the infant signified, viz. that the mother had come of Him whose forerunner and preacher he was about to be!" "Nor is it without a meaning," says St. Ambrose, "that before John was born Elisabeth prophesies, and Mary before the birth of the Lord, for the preludes of

human salvation are already creeping on. For as sin begun with woman, so also from women good things commence." And as it is described in the Prophet, "thou that bringest good tidings lift up thy voice with strength:"—for the loud voice, as the loud voice of our Lord at His death, indicates, that it is with Divine and not human power that she spake;—"*And Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost, and cried with a loud voice and said, Blessed art thou among women!*" using the very same words as the Angel had used to her before, for it was the same Holy Spirit that spake in both, declaring the same both by Angels and men. "Blessed among women," that is with a peculiar blessedness, so as to be indeed blessed above all women, but still "among women," one with women, not to be elevated above humanity; for he that doeth the will of God more perfectly, shall be more blessed even than she. "*And blessed is the fruit of thy womb;*" the fruit of thy womb, "for," says St. Ambrose, "Mary is the rod that shall come forth from the stem of Jesse, and Christ the Flower which shall proceed from its root⁶." And it was said of David, "of the fruit of thy body will I set on thy seat." And from this expression, Severus justly argues, "that Christ was Very Man, of the substance of His mother, for the fruit is of the same substance with the tree."

But the humility of Elisabeth is in accordance with her holiness and faith, and kindled by her gratitude; the more thou art exalted, the more humble thyself. And as the Baptist himself afterwards said, "I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me!" so Elisabeth now exclaims, "*And from whence*

• Isa. xi. 1. Septuag. Trans.

is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me ;” who am I, to obtain honour so great? for that thou art thyself the mother of my Lord the great harbinger within me hath already intimated, “*for, behold, when the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, there leaped for exceeding gladness the babe in my womb.*” The expression of leaped seems taken from the instinctive and playful movement of lambs, as from a secret kindling within at the presence of the great Sun of Righteousness. Nothing is more mysterious or incapable of marked separation than the distinction between sentient and unconscious nature; both blend imperceptibly, both are in the hands of the great Spirit, and capable of His inspiring power. Jacob and Esau strove together in the womb, as feeling the coming on of their divided characters and destinies. The becalmed sea, the darkened sun, the shaken earth, the spirits of the deep, the diseases of men, knew Him; much more His own great forerunner, though unborn; by exultation in the womb answering the salutation of the mother of the Lord.

“*And blessed,*” adds the inspired mother, “*is she that believed ;*”—if we might venture to interpret it on a subject so replete with danger (as the experience of the Church bears witness, and as Scripture by its silence and its admonitory caution seems to intimate), we should say “*she that believed,*” i. e. pre-eminently among, and in consequence blessed above women. And doubtless the humility of the blessed Virgin was such as supported her without falling in heights so great above humanity; but not so are we; and we cannot contemplate her, or our own common nature in her, without becoming giddy at the contemplation of it, and falling

into depths the more dangerous from that exaltation. "And blessed is she that believed," who hath had faith to realize, and by that realizing faith to bring about the fulfilment of those promises: "*For there shall be an accomplishment of those things which are spoken unto her from the Lord.*" "Blessed is she that believed;" we cannot think of the words without being warned by our Lord's own declaration on the subject, Who to the words, "blessed is the womb that bare Thee;" added, "yea, rather blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it." Thus St. Ambrose says on this passage, "And ye also are blessed who have heard and believed; for whatsoever soul hath believed, both conceiveth and bringeth forth the Word of God, and acknowledgeth His works. In each let there be the soul of Mary, that it may magnify the Lord; in each let there be the spirit of Mary, that it may rejoice in God. If according to the flesh the Mother of Christ is but one; yet, according to faith, the fruit which all bear is Christ."

"*And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Because He hath looked on the humiliation of His servant:*" of one, who although of the Royal stock of David, hath now been in obscurity, and perhaps among the humblest of the people. "*For, behold, from henceforth all generations shall esteem me blessed.*" Her first expressions, or something equivalent to them, are often found in the Psalms. With the words of David she seems to say, "O praise the Lord with me, and let us magnify His Name together;" and again, "praise the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me praise His holy Name." Very suitable was it that she, of the seed of David, and

one herself, if we may venture to say it, "after God's own heart," and who had probably ever lived in the Psalms, should throughout this Hymn use words so like those of that sacred Book. The pause indeed in each verse resembles that of the Psalms.

"*For He that is powerful hath done to me great things:*" yet even here she allows not a thought to rest on herself, but adds, "*and holy is His Name.*" It may be observed, that she speaks of Him that is Mighty, and Holy is His Name, and thus proceeds, but without mentioning the Name of God, excepting in the first verse, from a sort of reverential reserve, whereby men utter not that name of which their hearts are most full. Then as if attributing the favour she had thus derived, not to herself, but to Abraham and to David, and the covenant and promise made to them, she adds, "*and His mercy is to generations of generations unto them that fear Him.*" It is the mercy of God and His tenderness to the lowly, which the humble mind most dwells upon; for considering that it has nothing in itself worthy of His regard, it attributes all to His unmerited compassions.

And still in language resembling that of her Royal father, "*He hath made strength with His arm,*" for "the arm" of God is of itself an expression often used in the Psalms. "*He hath scattered the haughty in the purpose of their hearts.*" So was it with the Jews, who in their pride were looking for a temporal kingdom, being lifted up with their descent from Abraham, and in this the purpose of their heart, bent on views of ambition and covetousness: and He hath scattered them into all lands by the strength of His arm, that is by Christ Crucified, for He, the "arm of the Lord," was

not "revealed" unto them'. Thus He hath dispersed the proud Jews, hath exalted the humble Gentiles; and thus hath He in numberless ways given to the meek to tread on scorpions, and on all the power of the enemy. St. Cyril considers the evil spirits themselves to be the proud whom He has dispersed in their imaginations: Theophylact thinks the Jews; other writers, all the proud whose hearts He hath revealed. According to the beautiful coincidences of Scripture, we may take it in all these senses alike. The past tense by which it is spoken may, according to the Hebrew idiom, be prophetic; or it may be expressive of custom or habit, and therefore a principle in God's ways observed by faith, and which therefore becomes predictive, as such ways of God are but precursory of higher fulfilments. "*He hath put down potentates from thrones, and set on high them that are low.*" Thus He turned His favour from proud Saul to the humble David, as he kept the sheepfolds; thus, from proud Pharisees to babes; from proud Jews to humble heathens. The same exercise of His power was observed in His Providence among the nations of the world, to whatever nominal cause they might have attributed it, as the early Greek historian to the envy of the gods; the late Latin poet to fortune⁸. But it is the very characteristic of His kingdom, that it shall make low the mountains, and exalt the valleys. How great therefore must have been the humility of the Virgin herself to have been so highly exalted; how deep the contrition; that the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity should have so signally dwelt with her!

"The hungry He hath filled with good things, and

⁷ Isa. liii. 1.

⁸ Hor. lib. i. Ode xxxv.

the rich He hath sent away empty." The Jews, who were rich in the promises of God and all the covenanted blessings of Jerusalem, He hath sent away empty; but the hungry from among the Gentiles, represented by the Prodigal son, He hath filled with good things. And in the Church generally, them that hunger and thirst after righteousness He filleth: to those that deem themselves already full He imparts nothing of His grace or gifts. But more particularly at His second Advent in judgment, the hungry shall be "satisfied" with the riches of His house. This Hymn indeed is remarkable, as being the first clear annunciation of these peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, as they are afterwards set forth more fully in the Sermon on the Mount. "*He hath taken hold of Israel His child,*" or His servant,—but it is child in Hosea, "when Israel was a child, then I loved him⁹,"—so as "*to have remembered His mercy,*" or to show to mankind that He had not forgotten, as the word seems to be sometimes applied to the Almighty, as of His remembering our sins; and of His being mindful of His covenant. "*As He spake unto our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed for ever.*" Now at length is the great fulfilment of that promise, made to Abraham more than eighteen hundred years before, of the blessing to be on his seed: already are his seed "as the dust of the earth¹;" but that is not all; they shall not only people earth, but also Heaven; they shall likewise be, in the express words of the promise, "as the stars of Heaven²." For they "that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake." "And they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever³."

⁹ Hosea xi. 1.

² Gen. xv. 5; xxii. 17.

¹ Gen. xiii. 16.

³ Dan. xii. 2, 3.

This is the Hymn to which nothing can be added and nothing taken from it: embracing all the Gospel; its mercies, its doctrines, its precepts, its judgments, its covenant with the true Israel of God, and the fulfilment of all the prophecies going before. The Hymn of the Church, the Hymn of our Lord, the Hymn of all Hymns: the Hymn Evangelical; "the perpetual incense" of the evening sacrifice; rising daily before God "with the prayers of the Saints."

"And Mary remained with her about three months." Thrice the moon had filled her horn amidst those wild and desolate mountains, while the blessed Virgin and Elisabeth thus conversed in Hymns and Psalms, making melody in their hearts to the Lord; and in prayers and humiliations prepared themselves for those mighty events, which were on the point of now opening on Israel, having been "kept secret from the foundation of the world." But though these events were so heart-stirring and inspiring, and it may be said exciting, yet there appears something in the blessed Virgin herself calm, and clear, and meek in spirit; no hasty word, no sound of excitement escapes her. In the atmosphere of "a meek and quiet spirit," which is in the sight of God of such great price, she seems to walk as above this world; for such a heart the thought of God, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, fills with tranquillity; as the bird is supported calm and motionless in the infinite expanse of Heaven. If little is said of her, so she herself also, in the instinctive reserve of a pure and thoughtful mind, says but little, but "pondered these things in her heart." The obscure Nazareth, the lonely mountains of Judea, and this the natural partner of her sympathies, are all the society

in which her retiring and thoughtful spirit seems to move.

It has been well said of her, she was not insensible of the incomparable honour, yet not at all transported with it into any vain complacencies, but submits to it rather as a mysterious dispensation which she could not tell how to comprehend, than glories in it as a privilege. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to Thy Word." It is in the Hymn of the Magnificat that the blessed Virgin is disclosed to us more than by any other passage in Scripture, as expressive of her feelings and character; and it is remarkable as dropping in her exceeding exultation the thought of self—her joy is not in herself, but in God her Saviour: and from the overwhelming sense of His mercies to herself, in her lowly condition, she passes at once to the contemplation of these mercies in God, as evinced in this instance to herself: thus does she forget her own greatness in the aboundings of those mercies to others, and loses the individual instance, although that was herself, in the archetype itself of those eternal mercies in God; and especially on the manifestation of those mercies in the lowest estate of others. This circumstance renders this Hymn, even humanly speaking, so suited to the use of the Church, from its being the expression of those humble feelings whereby the individual is lost in that which is universal.

To this may be added another point indicating the humility and piety of the blessed Virgin, that the Hymn itself is not one freely and independently composed of her own words, but founded on that of Miriam and Hannah in the Old Testament. But then we know that in a higher view it is the Hymn of the Holy Spirit,

one and the same in different women, at different periods of time. And this consideration immediately connects it with another subject of great interest, before alluded to; how these holy women in Scripture, and especially the blessed Virgin herself, are in a mysterious manner made to typify and represent the Church. This Hymn throughout seems to be spoken in the person of the Church, and full of great and deep signification in this sense, as she whose spirit rejoices in God her Saviour, whom all generations shall call blessed, in which God exalts the humble and sets down the proud. So harmonious and coinciding, so full of Divine ordering and design are all things in Scripture. Thus numberless points seem to fall in with this mysterious figure of the Church being set forth as a woman. It may be observed that Heathen nations are represented under different figures; Egypt is "the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers⁴," and "the dragon was wroth with the woman⁵." Tyre as a ship which "the east wind hath broken in the midst of the seas⁶." Moab "the dove that maketh her nest in the sides of the hole's mouth⁷." Assyria as the cedar, "with a shadowing shroud and of an high stature⁸." Rome as the goat or the eagle. But the faithless synagogue of Israel as an unclean woman or an adulteress⁹. And the true Church as a woman immaculate and spotless, yet betrothed: as desolate, yet with "many more children than she that hath an husband¹."

Since therefore, as it has been well said, the most fertile source of error arises from mistaking of the symbol for the thing signified, it is not to be wondered

⁴ Ezek. xxix. 3. ⁵ Rev. xii. 17. ⁶ Ezek. xxvii. 26. ⁷ Jer. xlviii. 28.

⁸ Ezek. xxxi. 3.

⁹ Ezek. xxiii. 29. 43.

¹ Gal. iv. 27.

at that the blessed Virgin should have been by degrees exalted so far above humanity ; and from thence imperceptibly to have become the great object of Divine worship. Such is the perversity and obliquity of the human heart, that every high doctrine can alone be rightly received by the good : in the minds of the generality, which are evil, it assumes some form of error. And thus the consideration of a visible Church which should have influenced their hearts, takes hold of a sensible form, selecting for the object of its worship the most exalted of mankind ; and fastens thereon with that exclusive and intense corruption which is engendered in the many : while on the other side the Church itself becomes embodied with temporal power, infallible in human, tangible shape, not in that spiritual union which is of faith.

"And she returned unto her own home."

SECTION V

THE BIRTH OF THE BAPTIST

"But to Elisabeth the time was now fulfilled for her delivery ; and she brought forth a son." A birth so extraordinary must necessarily have created great interest, and much sympathy and congratulation from those to whom she was related or known : but the greatness of the child, and the miraculous interposition which had attended his birth, were not at all communicated unto them. *"And the neighbours and her kindred heard that the Lord had magnified upon her His mercy ;*

and they rejoiced with her." So that this was already a pledge of the fulfilment of that which the Angel had foretold, that "many" should "rejoice at his birth." "They rejoiced," says St. Ambrose, "for the birth of the saints hath the joy of many; for it is a good common to all: righteousness is a virtue of which all derive the benefit. Therefore on the rising of the just man the sign of his future life is sent beforehand; and the grace of the virtue which is to follow is represented by the rejoicing of neighbours, which prefigures the same²."

"*And it came to pass that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child:*" they came to the house of Zacharias, not to the synagogue, for Elisabeth could not have gone forth for three and thirty days³. And circumcisions recorded in Scripture, as of Abraham, of the son of Moses, and others, were not in the synagogue. For the rite itself in its institution preceded the Law and the Temple. "*And they called him by the name of his father Zacharias: and his mother answered and said, No, but he shall be called John.*" The circumcision first took place, and afterwards the giving of the name; "Because first," says St. Chrysostom, "the Divine seal is imposed, and afterwards the human appellation; or because no one is worthy to be admitted into the book of life unless he first cast aside things carnal, which circumcision signifieth⁴." His kindred would impose on him the Priestly name, as adhering to the Law: but his mother through the Spirit imposes upon him a name signifying the grace of God, and setting aside the Law: or setting aside the name given according to the line of succession as to one of Priestly parents; and giving him a new name as herald of the Priest according to the order of Melchisedec. For

² In Luc. lib. ii. 30.

³ Levit. xii. 4.

⁴ Hom. 39.

in thus speaking she doubtless was silently instructed by the same Spirit who spake by the Angel to Zacharias ; and thus Rebecca and Rachel were perhaps Divinely controlled to assign names to their children, symbols given before of Divine superintendence, and like stars presiding over their birth and destinies. So important was the giving of a name. Not that the name always indicated the future condition of the child, for often it appears an acknowledgment of God's mercies to the parents. Thus Eve gave the name of Cain because she had "gotten a man from the Lord ;" and the name of Seth, because God had "appointed another seed instead of Abel:" and Sarah gave the name of Isaac because God "hath caused" her "to laugh;" and Moses gave the name of Gershom because he had been "a stranger;" and that of Eliezer because the God of his father was his "help;" and Joseph gave the name of Manasseh, for God had made him to "forget" all his toil ; and Ephraim because God had caused him to be "fruitful;" and the name of Samuel was given because he was "asked of God." All of which names seem to have had reference to their parents : and according to which the name of John might have reference to the "graciousness" of God now shown to his parents ; so that many shall "rejoice" at his birth. Thus Maldonatus takes it. But still these names had also a prophetic signification secretly contained in them, besides the intention of the parents. Thus Samuel signifies "asked of God," but he was afterwards remarkable for intercession or for "asking of God." Sometimes the latter is the point mentioned, thus Noah was so named because he "shall comfort us ;" but especially was this the case in names given of God Himself, as Israel. In like manner therefore the name of John may be prospective, and

signify the graciousness of God to be shown in that child, or the grace to be given him. "*And they beckoned to his father what he would wish for him to be called. And having asked for a tablet, he wrote saying, John is his name;*" not shall be, but is his name, the name which he has already received of God. "He has a naming," says St. Ambrose, "which we have acknowledged, not which we have chosen." And thus, as observed elsewhere of the Title written upon the Cross by Pilate, it was providentially brought to pass, that the name is written, and doubly declared as unalterable, by the very circumstances which rendered it a matter of dispute.

"*And they all marvelled;*" they marvelled that although Zacharias could not have heard the name that Elisabeth had given, yet he gave the same; they marvelled that both should give a name so peculiar and new; they marvelled at the recovery of his speech by Zacharias under circumstances so unwonted and remarkable. All indicated something mysterious and Divine presiding over the birth of this child, himself born beyond nature. The very writing of this name was in itself an act of faith, and immediately the sign of his unbelief was removed. "*And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue. And he spake, praising God.*" As if by anticipation of the time which was approaching, when "the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped," and "the tongue of the dumb shall sing." And indeed, it may be true of this infliction also, that it was not that he had "sinned or his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." Nor is it bodily relief only, but with the faith by which the deafness is removed shall they receive spiritual blessings. "Behold," says St. Ambrose, "how good is

God, and ready to forgive sins ; not only does He restore what had been taken away, but vouchsafes also unlooked for blessings. He who had been aforetime dumb, prophecies ; for this is the greatest grace of God, when men confess Him whom they have denied. Let no one therefore distrust, no one conscious of past sins despair of divine rewards."

Beautiful indeed, as Bede observes, is this figure, that Zacharias speaks on the eighth day, the day of Christ's Resurrection, when the secrets of the legal Priesthood were laid open and revealed. And Origen still more particularly ; for speaking of John as "the voice in the wilderness,"—the voice that precedes the Word,—he says, "perhaps on this account Zacharias having disbelieved of the birth of that Voice which manifests the Word of God, loses his voice, receiving it again when the Voice, the forerunner of the Word, is born⁵." And perhaps in this as also in other things, Zacharias may be a figure of the Jewish people, that after their unbelief their tongue shall at last be loosed, and they shall confess Christ. Already in Zacharias, in Elisabeth, and St. Mary, and soon after in Joseph, there appears one fulfilment of the promise made to their forefathers, "your sons and your daughters shall prophesy ; your old men shall dream dreams ; your young men shall see visions ; and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out My Spirit⁶." Thus, not the coming only, but the mysterious Presence of Christ already begins to show indications of itself. And it must be remembered, that during the interval before St. John's birth our Lord's mother had been with them. "For the three months," says Origen, "Mary remained with Elisabeth, after the

⁵ In Joan. Tom. ii. 26, and Tom. vi. 10.

⁶ Joel ii. 28.

Angel had spoken, that by some ineffable virtue the present Saviour should instruct not only John, but Zacharias also ; as the evangelical narrative now indicates⁷."

"And there came a fear upon all them that dwelt round about. And in the whole of the hill country of Judea all these sayings were spoken of. And all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What therefore shall this child be? And the hand of the Lord was with him."

After this statement of the effect of these things, the Evangelist now returns to give that Hymn which he had before spoken of, when the tongue of Zacharias was loosed and he praised God ; or it may be the account of a more formal hymn afterwards delivered by him. *"And Zacharias his father was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied."* The Hymn indeed does not distinctly foretell things that are to come : but in the sense in which the term "prophesying" is used of Divine inspiration and miraculous agency, nothing could be more prophetic ; for it speaks of the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, in a manner that was quite unknown to the Apostles themselves, even after Christ had been with them for years ; and even after the Holy Spirit had been given. For it speaks of "the knowledge of salvation," "the forgiveness of sins," deliverance from the hands of spiritual enemies, so as "to serve Him without fear," the fulfilment in the highest sense of every Evangelical promise. And it may be observed, that it is not of his own son that Zacharias speaks, excepting towards the close of the Hymn, and then only as a subordinate subject, only as the object before him, which led his thoughts to those promises, as coming in, itself but a small part.

⁷ In Luc. Hom. x.

and the first indication of that great and approaching dispensation with which his mind is absorbed.

He prophesied, "*saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He hath visited and made redemption for His people;*" for His people Israel after the flesh; for He came to seek "the lost sheep of the house of Israel," of whom He had said, that He would be their God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and they should be His "people:" but more especially for the true Israel of God, His faithful children scattered throughout the world; to redeem them from that captivity, whereby they are sold under sin, and in bondage to divers lusts. "*And hath raised up a horn of salvation for us, in the house of David, His child.*" The "horn of salvation," more than once occurs in the Old Testament; and the word "horn" is we know of very frequent occurrence throughout the Scriptures in this metaphorical sense, "mine horn is exalted in the Lord," said Hannah, and "He shall exalt the horn of His Anointed." And the figure from which it is taken appears evident from expressions such as, "my horn shalt Thou exalt like the horn of an unicorn:" and from the horns of the beasts in the visions of Daniel, in all of which places it signifies power. The expression is further hallowed to sacred use by "the horns of an altar," and "the horn of sanctifying oil." It seems therefore in the first case, an emblem which God hath given to nature of that power which overcomes the world; and afterwards as a power apparently cut off, which seems to represent the power that goeth forth in the Sacrifice of Christ; having lost indeed its natural, but found a spiritual strength; such is its meaning in the horns of the altar and the graces of His Spirit from the horn of oil. Indeed in both senses is it often found. as in

the Prophet Daniel, and in the Revelation of St. John. *"According as He hath spoken through the mouth of His holy Prophets which have been from the beginning;—salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us."* That like Joshua of old from whom He is named, He shall deliver us from those enemies we know not of, and place us in His own land, "the land of the living:" where all shall live to Him and serve Him in holiness. "Let us not think," says Origen, "that this is spoken of bodily but of spiritual enemies. For the Lord Jesus hath come mighty in battle to destroy all our enemies, and to set us free from their snares and temptations." That somehow or other we should be redeemed from our great enemy, who alone worketh against us all temporal and eternal harms; but what that deliverance, and what those adversaries may be, has been always kept as the secret of God, and revealed only to those that fear Him.

"To perform His mercy on us together with our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant," the fathers by their faith co-operating; in promise receiving; united with their children in the fulfilment of that mysterious promise which He has been pleased to call His covenant with mankind, or with the Israel of God. "Together with our fathers," says Origen, "because, as I suppose, our fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the choir of holy Prophets and just men, enjoyed the benefits of Christ's presence. For if He made peace through the blood of His Cross of things in earth and things in Heaven, according to the Divine Apostle; why do you hesitate to receive that even to our fathers this visitation came: which was wrought by His going down to Hell." But Theophylact, that the grace of Christ extends even to those that are

dead ; for through Him not we only, but they who before have died shall rise again. And that He hath showed mercy with them in that He hath fulfilled their hope and longing. "*The oath which He sware unto Abraham, that He would give us,*"—that oath beyond all oaths of which St. Paul speaks, that because He could sware by nothing greater, He sware by Himself ; "*that without fear, delivered out of the hand of our enemies, we might do Him service in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.*" Origen seems to understand it of our deliverance without fear,—of our merciful rescue from the jaws of those enemies which we feared, from which he would translate us in a moment of time into His inheritance and portion. But it seems rather spoken of our serving Him "without slavish fear," by receiving the adoption of sons : and by walking in righteousness "before Him," not before men as the Scribes and Pharisees, but walking before God in the light of the living ; fulfilling what was said of Enoch, and what was said to Abraham, "walk thou before Me and be thou perfect ;" walking "as strangers and sojourners with God." And here does the Priestly Prophet disclose the "great mystery of godliness," not only that secret of the calling of the Gentiles which had been kept unrevealed for so many generations ; but also, the spiritual nature of the Messiah's kingdom : that it is to sanctify to Himself "a peculiar people zealous of good works," by means of Immanuel or God with us. This is the great Deliverer, whom the true Israelites, circumcised in heart, could alone look for in the Holy Ghost : for God's commandments were dearer to them than thousands of gold and silver ; better than the corn and wine of an earthly Canaan. And they were taught by the Spirit, that "the world passeth

away and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." *"And thou, child, shalt be called,"* and according to that calling shall in truth be, *"a prophet of the Most High; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord, to make ready His ways."* as a herald that precedes the advance of a great Prince or royal army. But as he had before spoken of serving God in holiness, and there can be no acceptable service without past transgression being blotted out, even this too is now revealed by the Spirit; *"to give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins."* As the Evangelist of the Gentiles, this St. Luke also mentions in the preaching of the Baptist, that it was "for the remission of sins." *"Through the bowels of mercy of our God, by which hath visited us the rising from on high."* Yea, He Himself hath visited us who is called the Rising in the Greek Scriptures, or the Day-spring. And because, says Theophylact, God hath forgiven sins not on account of our works, but of His own mercy, therefore it is added, *"through the bowels of mercy of our God."* "For God could not have been known," says the same writer, "but by His forgiving their sins unto the people: for it is the part of God to forgive sins." How else indeed could He be manifested unto sinful creatures, so that they could live under that manifestation of Himself? And, therefore, we may observe, that when God was manifested before Moses, it was proclaiming Himself, "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity." And Bede says on this passage, "but the Jews prefer to wait for Antichrist than to receive Christ; for they desire not to be inwardly liberated from the dominion of sin, but outwardly from the yoke of human slavery."

“The Day-spring from on high hath visited us ;” and not of this only does the Prophet speak ; but even that mysterious dispensation, which not only the Jews generally understood not, but which even Apostles were so long in learning, and could not comprehend, is now darkly revealed to Zacharias, speaking in the Spirit : for he makes use of words similar to those which speak expressly of the call and coming of the Gentiles, “who sat in darkness and the shadow of death :” words so used by the Prophet, and so applied afterwards by the Evangelist, on our Lord’s first preaching in their borders. *“To give light unto them who are sitting in darkness and the shadow of death : to direct our feet into the way of peace.”* Outward darkness and night are themselves shadows of temporal death ; and temporal death itself a shadow of the worse death which is eternal : and the darkness and death of the soul in sin are the beginning of that worse death : on the contrary, day and light are shadows of the Heavenly day and substantial light : and temporal life of that life which is in God : and Christ is already the true Light and the Sun of righteousness. He now shines on those that are sitting in darkness ; but in the fulness of His next coming, that Day shall come as a snare on all that sit on the face of the earth. In the meanwhile they on whom the light arises have their feet directed by it into the way of peace ; this is that light that lighteneth the path of the just, which will burn more and more brightly unto the perfect day.

Such was the Hymn of Zacharias, being himself a Priest and a Prophet, belonging to the old dispensation, and appearing in the way of legal righteousness ; representing the Law and the Prophets, inasmuch as both by his silence and his speech he preached the Gospel, and

bore testimony unto Christ. And it was on the day of Circumcision that he thus spake, that rite which belonged to the Law, but especially contained within it the germ of the Gospel, being a pledge of that mortification which shall be in the true disciples of Christ, a part of that Sacrifice which was perfected on the Cross, and in itself preparatory as it were to the Crucifixion. Being moreover on the eighth day, this Hymn sets forth also the Resurrection of Christ: the new dispensation wherein old things are passed away, and all things are become new: speaking of holiness of life and remission of sins, as gifts to be vouchsafed in the Christian Kingdom now coming in, that "new Heaven and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness."

After this detailed account of his miraculous birth, the holy Baptist is now entirely withdrawn from our eyes for thirty years: his childhood is described in a few words, and those the same with which our Lord's childhood is also spoken of. "*But the child grew and waxed strong in spirit.*" There is no scriptural or traditional account of him: but painters have delighted to give vent to that imagination by which we are naturally wont to picture the child, as seen in company with our Lord Himself as a Child. That thus they should have been found together as children it is natural to suppose, from the circumstance of the visit of Mary to Elisabeth, from their connexion by kindred, and still more by a holy sympathy, arising from a mysterious sense of the depth of those things among which they walked. And the interest already Divinely indicated in the Forerunner before his birth, at the presence and voice of our Lord's mother, affords a reasonable intimation on which a devout imagination may dwell; and

infers a continuance of the same. Such may be supposed to abide as a halo of Divine light, unseen by man, around the infancy of our Lord, when in company with that child who was to be His forerunner and herald. But if the Baptist is in his life "hidden with Christ in God," so was it also with his infancy and childhood; he is throughout withdrawn from the sight of men into the wilderness. Holiness of heart and life may be shown before men, and is exercised among them, but it can scarcely be acquired and formed before men, but requires silence, retirement, and solitude. "*And he was in the wilderness until the day of his showing unto Israel*" (Luke). Thus Moses was trained in the wilderness before his coming forth to Israel; thus Israel was exercised and proved in the wilderness before the land of promise; thus David before his kingdom was prepared by trial and desolation; thus Elijah; thus Christ, before His teaching, for forty days in the wilderness shadowed forth the period of probation; thus St. Paul was for two years in Arabia. It is in the desert that God and His Angels are most near; as nature itself indicates; for who is there that in solitary places is not conscious of the presence of unseen beings?

SECTION VI

THE ANGEL APPEARING TO JOSEPH

WHEN the blessed Virgin had now returned from her cousin Elisabeth to her home at Nazareth, trying and perplexing were the circumstances in which she was placed. From the depth of her feeling, and greatness

of her piety, it was her custom to ponder things in her heart, rather than to disclose the mercies of God to herself, with that sort of virginal retirement of spirit which we find in "the beloved disciple," and in Daniel. "My cogitations," says the latter, "much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart^a." And indeed it has been observed among holy men, that a characteristic of true visions and favours of God is an inclination to conceal them; of false visions and delusions of the enemy to display and divulge. But here secrecy was accompanied with shame the most afflicting to a sensitive mind; and with the unjust suspicion and consequent pain of one to whom she was betrothed: yet to whom she ventured not to speak on a subject so full indeed of Divine greatness and exultation, yet at the same time of a nature so delicate. And thus did our blessed Saviour's shame and suffering for our sakes already begin; for His holy Mother is already under suspicion in human eyes, and even to those most dear: as if setting forth in figure those in whom Christ shall be born, who shall say, "For Thy sake have I suffered reproach: shame hath covered my face." Thus He also Himself had to endure the reproach of blasphemy, because He was the Son of God. This painful position of the Holy Virgin continued till this effect was already produced in the mind of Joseph, and he must necessarily have been in much distress and difficulty. It is at such emergencies, and not till such have occurred, that God interferes: when the very trouble and perplexity prepares the mind to receive a messenger from God. Such Divine interference in the season of extremity is shown throughout the

^a Dan. vii. 28.

whole of the Old Testament: when the Egyptian bondage was most severe, then Moses was the most nigh; when the chariots of Pharaoh were behind, and the sea before stopping up their way, their supernatural escape was open: the Philistine had seemed to prevail before David appeared: and throughout the history of the Judges, it was not till the Israelites were in great straits that the miraculous aid was vouchsafed. And indeed so much has that been noticed in the dealings of Providence with mankind, that it was proverbial among Heathens, so as to lend a figure to Epicurean philosophy, and a rule for the fictions of poets, that there must be a knot to untie to justify the interference of a God⁹.

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was thus. For His Mother, Mary, having been espoused to Joseph, before they came together" (Matt.). For she had been absent now at the house of Elisabeth; or it may signify before the marriage was solemnized, and that, as St. Chrysostom observes, "being betrothed persons they lived in the same house together." But Maldonatus endeavours to controvert this opinion. *"She was found with child by the Holy Ghost,"* i. e. through the operation of the Spirit, for "it is the Spirit that quickeneth," but not as God the Father. *"And Joseph her husband being a just man,"* i. e. either one full of considerate charity and mercy; or a conscientious observer of the Law, which by specific commands in particular cases, gave general principles to guide men's actions, and had thus stamped all impurity; from which a righteous Israelite would keep clear as from legal pollution or uncleanness. Thus, therefore, was he desirous to observe the Law, *"and yet not wishing to make her a public example,"* as the

⁹ "Nec deus intersit, nisi dignus vindice nodus." Hor. A. P. 191.

severity of the Law might have justified, "*he was wishing privately to put her away.*" "St. Matthew has beautifully taught," says St. Ambrose, "how a righteous man ought to act who has detected his wife's disgrace; so as at once to keep himself guiltless of her blood, and yet pure from her defilements." And St. Augustin, "Joseph, being a just man, with great mercy spared his wife, in this great crime of which he suspected her. The seeming certainty of her unchastity tormented him, and yet because he alone knew of it, he was willing not to publish it, but to send her away privily; seeking her benefit rather than the punishment of the sinner¹." St. Chrysostom seems rather to take the term "just man," not as an observer of the Law, by which she was liable to be stoned to death (and not only to dismissal), but as including charity; as one acting by a higher rule, and above the Law. May it not be taken in the spiritual and better sense in which Christ expounds the Law itself, as implying purity and also mercy? So that Joseph in thus acting, was righteous according to the Law in the better sense: as pure and not wishing to cohabit with one defiled; and likewise at the same time as merciful also, and free from jealousy; of which it is said that "jealousy is cruel as the grave²." But Origen seems to suppose a higher cause than that of a suspicion of infidelity. "He sought to put her away, because he saw in her a great sacrament, to approach which he thought himself unworthy." And hence St. Jerome also, that "Joseph, knowing her purity, and wondering at what had happened, covers in silence that mystery which he could not explain³."

¹ Aur. Cat. Ox. Tr.

² Cant. viii. 6.

³ Com. Matt. l. i. cap. 1.

“And while he was considering these things,”—considering with anxious religious apprehension, as the word generally implies,—*“Behold, an Angel of the Lord in a dream appeared unto him.”* It was not till he was in this state of mind that the Angel appeared: to the contrite, despairing of human aid, God manifests Himself; when the cloud seems to be the most dark, then breaks forth the light of His countenance. But there is a difference in the appearance of the Angel on this occasion to that of the two preceding, to Zacharias and St. Mary: for now and three times afterwards to Joseph, it is in a dream; but in the two former instances it does not appear to have taken place in a dream.

It may be that the open appearance in waking hours implied greater nearness and higher acceptance and honour, than the more veiled manifestation by a dream. Thus we read, “If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make Myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all Mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches.” And yet in all the instances recorded of supernatural visitations in Scripture, there does not appear sufficient to mark this distinction between that which is by dream, and that which is by more open Divine manifestation. To Abimelech, to Pharaoh, to Nebuchadnezzar, to Laban the Syrian, to the Midianite, whom Gideon heard; but also to Abraham, to Jacob, to Joseph, to Solomon, to Daniel, to St. Peter, and St. Paul, communications were made by dream. Nor is there any marked difference in the nature of the things thus communicated; excepting so far as the necessity of the case required. And St. Chrysestom seems to attribute the

differences here in the mode of communication to this circumstance: that thus the Angel appeared only in a dream to Joseph, as not needing the more open visitation; which the Virgin and Zacharias did from the nature of those discourses, and the Shepherds did from their ignorance. It is here sufficient to observe, that dreams are the more frequent mode of Divine communication: in sleep more especially, and in dreams, access is found into the spiritual world, and the soul is admitted into the land of spirits⁴. Hence, no doubt, arose the respect paid to dreams in all parts of the Heathen world; derived from traditional belief of communications having been thus made; and an awful sense of this is most to be observed in the earliest writers, as in Homer and in Æschylus. As access into the deeper world of spirits is then most found, so nowhere does conscience speak more fearfully than in dreams: for the dream of Clytemnestra in Æschylus, is not less appalling than that of the remorseful Queen in our own great Poet and Tragedian. And we may believe not only that there were true Divine interferences among the Heathen by dream: but also, as in all other matters of religion, that the devil should pervert such sacred truths to his own evil purposes. From whence the Wise man saith, "If they be not sent from the Most High, in thy visitation, set not thine heart upon them. For dreams have deceived many, and they have failed that put their trust in them⁵." No doubt all such supernatural agencies closely touch upon the subject of moral philosophy: evil habits are in the Scripture designated evil spirits: and we find that Aristotle speaks of the moral faculties being alive in dreams: for he says, "that in those movements of the soul in sleep, the dreams

⁴ See *The Passion*, pp. 252, 253.

⁵ *Eccles.* xxxiv. 6, 7.

of the good are better than those of ordinary men⁶." We may suppose, therefore, that as our moral nature is awake, and operating in dreams as well as in waking hours: so spiritual agencies are active in both: but as the outer senses are then closed, the more ready access is then found into the spiritual world. And when do we expect such supernatural interferences, but on the eve of great coming events: and in states of perplexity and doubt?

The Angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, "*saying, Joseph, thou son of David!*" For David shall never be forgotten, and there is some mysterious intention in Joseph also being the son of David, as well as the Virgin Mary, as the genealogies intimate. "*Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for That Which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a Son.*" And thou also shalt be highly exalted as the guardian of His childhood, and adopted father, and as such shall declare His name. "*And thou shalt call His name Jesus,*" or Jehovah Saviour, and the reason of the name is given, "*for He shall save His people from their sins.*" Thus the same Spirit had also expressed the same by Zacharias, "to save us from our enemies, and from the hands of all that hate us." This also will imply His Godhead, for "who can forgive sins but God only?" And it was set forth in the type of His name of old, who led His people into the land of promise: for "Moses called Oshea the son of Nun, Jehoshua⁷," indicating, what the Angel with the drawn sword expressed, that "it was not their own arm that helped them," but God their Saviour. But that this saving us from our enemies and our sins, was not as a warrior

⁶ Ethics, lib. i. c. xiii.

⁷ Numb. xiii. 16.

only, is set forth by that other type of the same name, "Joshua the High Priest," at the building of the second Temple. He is "clothed in filthy garments," with "Satan standing at his right hand," as bearing our sins, and clothed with our humanity; which He shall lay aside in the grave, and be "clothed with a change of raiment⁸." Leprous as the hand of Moses when he thrust it into his bosom; but restored again pure of leprosy, when He rose with His glorified Body.

And now St. Matthew, as writing for the Jews, who knew not of this miraculous conception, writing at the request of Jews, and himself a Hebrew, introduces as he usually does, and as our Lord Himself does when speaking to the Pharisees, the testimony of their own Prophet. "*But all this was done,*"—according to that all-creative word, which had gone forth from God, the Breath of the Spirit that quickeneth all things;—"that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the Lord through the Prophet, saying, Behold, a Virgin shall be with child, and bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is, being interpreted, God with us." This reference indeed to the Prophet is taken by St. Chrysostom as a continuation of the Angel's speech. "The Angel," he says, "to make what he said easy to be received, brings in Isaiah." But it seems rather as an observation of the Evangelist. The expression "they shall call His name" is but the sacred language for He shall be: "it is customary," says St. Chrysostom, "in Scripture, to substitute the events that take place for names; therefore to say 'they shall call His name Immanuel,' means nothing else than that they shall see God amongst men." As it is said, the city "shall

⁸ Zech. iii. 4.

be called the City of righteousness," not that it shall be so called, but should be so after a Divine manner.

But the prophecy itself is one, the fulfilment of which may be taken as an instance of the manifold and progressive senses of Scripture. For the primary fulfilment of it in the promise made to Ahaz was of course in a very inferior and subordinate sense; which was simply this, that the events which were to ensue, viz. the deliverance from two hostile kings, will make it appear that they have "God" present "with them," as St. Jerome explains it. But now in the fulness of time, when God Himself hath come to walk with men, and to be with us, in greatness inconceivable is it fulfilled: when "God was manifest in the flesh" forgiving sins: when "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten Son of God." But this itself was but the pledge and earnest of a higher fulfilment, when being taken from us in sight, He came to be more intimately with us in spirit. This was surely in a higher sense, "God with us;" when "there came a sound as of a rushing mighty wind;" and "the tabernacle of God" was come to be "with men;" and with the promise that "He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God." As He said Himself of His faithful disciple, "I will manifest Myself unto him." "We will come unto him, and make our abode with him." This therefore was a still greater accomplishment of the promise, "God with us." But yet this itself is but a faint and feeble earnest of that ulterior fulfilment, when God shall have taken mankind to be with Him in Heaven, when they "shall ever be with the Lord," when they shall ever be with Him and "see His face," when

they shall "see Him as He is;" for now "we see in a glass darkly, but then face to face." And this present state at best is spoken of as "absence from the Lord," in contradistinction from that departing hence which is "far better." And all this is intended by the words of the Prophet, for without this as contained within it, there is no true fulfilment; the less hath in it the greater; the greater ariseth out of the less, and could not be without its prior fulfilment; nor would the prior fulfilment avail any thing without the fulness of the entire and final consummation thereof.

"Then Joseph, when he awoke out of sleep, did as the Angel of the Lord commanded him, and took unto him his wife. And he knew her not until she brought forth her Son, the First-born. And he called His name Jesus." He so named Him, i. e. at the circumcision, but St. Matthew mentions it here out of the order of time, to indicate the faithful obedience of Joseph to this Divine message. We do not of course suppose by the term "the First-born," that she afterwards had children by Joseph; for there is no evidence of this, and to suppose it without evidence is abhorrent to natural feeling and piety, contrary to the opinion of all good writers, and highly derogatory to the holiness of Joseph. "They are most depraved," says St. Hilary, "who suggest such an opinion." And St. Jerome, "from the words, her First-born Son, some most perversely suspect that Mary had other sons, saying, that first-born can only be said of one that has brethren. But this is the manner of Scripture, to call the first-born not only one who is followed by brethren, but the first-birth of the mother." "Her Son, the First-born," is the same title by which St. Luke also speaks of our Lord at His birth. That is to say, the Antitype of all that

which the Law prefigured when "that which openeth the womb among the children of Israel" was "sanctified and set apart to the Lord," as saved by Him when all the first-born in the land of Egypt were slain. And afterwards the Levites were taken instead of the first-born among the children of Israel. But when the Levitical Priesthood ceased, and the High Priest rent his clothes in token that the Priesthood of Levi was rent from them, then the First-born Himself of the children of Israel must be taken by the sacrifice of Christ: and "they shall look upon Him whom they have pierced," "as one that is in bitterness for his first-born¹." This was prefigured by the sacrifices of the Law: and even long before the Law, by the sacrifice of Abel, which was "the firstling of his flock." Thus as the first-born of Egypt, so now the first-born of Israel after the flesh shall fall by the destroying Angel; while the first-born of the true Israel of God is saved, and sanctified as a living sacrifice unto Him. Moreover, it is to be observed, in connexion with these sacrifices, that when the first-born are set apart, and afterwards when the Levites are taken in lieu of them, express and emphatic mention is made of the first-born "of beast" as well as of man;—"that which openeth the womb among the children of Israel, and among their cattle," from that time when "all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast," were slain¹. And the Levites are taken for the first-born of the children of Israel, and the cattle of the Levites instead of their cattle². It seems to be in allusion to this that Christ is spoken of by St. Paul, as "the First-born of every creature," or of all creation,

¹ Zech. xii. 10.

² Exod. xii. 12.

² Numb. iii. 45.

i.e. of man and of beast. It seems also in mysterious reference to the same, that the Everlasting kingdom of Christ is represented, as having some connexion with the new creation both of man and of beast in subjection to Him. "Thou hast put all things in subjection under His feet; all sheep and oxen: yea, and the beasts of the field." And both at His birth in the manger, and after His baptism in the wilderness, He was "with the beasts;" as the true First-born offering Himself for them, the First-born of both man and beast. And as it is at Christ's Resurrection, especially, that all these things are put in subjection under His feet, in the above-mentioned description, so it is to the Resurrection that this expression of the First-born is applied. All these typify Him as the First-born of the new creation, for He is "the First-born from the dead," "the First-born among many brethren:" and in the **P**salms, with reference to His Resurrection and Ascension, "I will make Him, My First-born, higher than the Kings of the earth." But what the Law prefigured is to be found not in Christ only, but in His Church also; in which the command has its spiritual and deeper fulfilment, "be thou fruitful and multiply." For as the first-born in Israel were many, and as the Levites were many, so also is Christ; for His Church is described as "the Church of the first-born which are written in Heaven." The first-born who have the inheritance, who are of the Royal Priesthood; named on the eighth day, the day of Resurrection, with the new name which no man knoweth, "save he that receiveth it:" being risen together with Him Who is the "First-born from the dead." Many were the types and shadows going before, but the Archetype and Verity, the true First-born, is but One; but in Him

being One there are many; many who are sanctified and have the inheritance in Him: as it is said of Israel, though many, "Israel is My son, even My first-born." And of the Israel in the Spirit, that they are "the first-fruits unto God and the Lamb." These considerations are sufficient to show, that when it is said that she brought forth her Son, the First-born, Scripture speaks of things infinitely vast and Divine, and not as indicating other subsequent children, as some would extract from the expression; an implication as unworthy of the holy words of Scripture, as it is derogatory to our Lord's mother, and His reputed father or natural guardian.

SECTION VII

THE CITY OF DAVID

THE prophecies going before had so strongly marked out the line and throne of David, as that of which Christ was to be born, that it seemed requisite to designate clearly the fulfilment of this circumstance; more especially so, as the house of David had now disappeared from the sight of men. It does not appear that there were any of that race in Judea itself; at all events, an heir living in great obscurity in a distant and ignoble country, would have little power of maintaining that claim by assertion only. For though the blessed Virgin Mary had been pronounced to be "of the house of David:" and Joseph also the "son of David," by the voice of an Angel, yet some proof of this in the sight of all men was needed. It so happened, that in the first

mention of David, the place of his birth is recorded, "the son of Jesse, the Bethlehemite;" and then the same is distinctly kept in remembrance, and interwoven with prophecy. Humanly speaking, however, there appeared now no means of establishing this lineage; but all means are in the hands of Omnipotence; none too great to further this dispensation; all things are for Christ and His elect; for them are empires formed and increased; the hearts of kings are in His hand, "as the rivers of water He turneth them wheresoever He will" for the sake of His Church; although, as is often the case, they are but unwilling and unconscious agents in His hand. For the restoration of the temporal Israel, God stirred up a Gentile King; much more now should He do the same for the restoration of the true Israel. We read in the Book of Ezra "that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing³." For much greater cause is the empire of Rome now put in movement. All the world was still and silent, an universal peace reigned, and one Emperor over all. Even the edict itself, as coming from Augustus, and the subjection to it of the nation and heirs of David, indicated that the sceptre had departed from Judah, and the lawgiver from between his feet: the period therefore had arrived when Shiloh should come. The very dominion itself of Rome, founded on wrong and tyranny, indicated the need of Him Who should deliver mankind from all enemies on earth, and from spiritual wickednesses in high places. The world was still. "Those whom the Lord hath sent to walk

³ EZRA i. 1.

to and fro through the earth, answered the Angel of the Lord, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and behold all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest. Then the Angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of Hosts, how long wilt Thou not have mercy on Jerusalem⁴? The world was still; it was like that stillness in Heaven before the trumpets sounded; all things seemed to say, "be still, and know that I am God." The Roman Emperor was thus called upon to bear witness to the King, the King of the Jews; to Whom the utmost parts of the world are given for a possession: as the Roman Emperor, by his governor, bore witness also to the true King at His death.

"And it came to pass in those days, there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, for all the world to be taxed," or enrolled in the census. *"This taxing"* or enrolment *"first took place when Cyrenius was governor of Syria."* But as it is said that this Cyrenius, or Quirinus, does not appear to have been appointed governor of Syria till ten years later, perhaps we might have translated it, "this was the first taxing under Cyrenius, the governor of Syria." And indeed Origen, if we may judge from his words, extant in the Latin⁵, seems thus to translate the passage, without being aware of the chronological difficulty the other reading gives rise to. *"And all went to be enrolled, each unto his own city."* The world is enrolled, and each goes unto his own place, at the birth of Him Who begins now to enrol His citizens of Heaven, and to set them their place in eternity. He Who is here in a manger, will be there on a throne: He that humbleth Himself here shall be there exalted;

⁴ Zech. i. 10. 12.

⁵ "Hæc fuit descriptio prima, a preside Syriæ Cyrino."

and of them who are babes upon earth shall His kingdom there be formed. "Spiritually in type," says St. Ambrose, "His own people were bringing together their names to Christ." And Origen, "to the more earnest inquirer, it appears to intimate some sacred mystery, that Christ must be enrolled in the census taken of the world, that written with all He might sanctify all, that being enrolled together with the world, He might afford to the world the participation of Himself; that after this enrolment He might enrol men out of the world with Himself, in the book of the living, so that they who believed in Him might henceforth be enrolled in Heaven⁶."

And the holy Family too, as the patriarchs of old, living as strangers and pilgrims upon earth, must be enrolled, and entered as citizens of the City of David, the City which is above, where the seat of David is—which shall be "like as the sun before Me,"—and "as the days of Heaven:" and this their enrolment below is a type of that their more abiding citizenship in that which is alone truly to them "their own city." "*And Joseph went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto a city of David, which is called Bethlehem; because of his being of the house and lineage of David: to be enrolled with Mary, the wife espoused to him, being great with child.*" Thus, in the vastness of Divine economy, were these things fulfilled as it were in secret, unknown and unnoticed of men: and perhaps even the holy persons themselves were not observing the fulfilment, any further than that they felt doubtless that, in these and all other matters, they were walking in the depths of a vast ocean of things unsearchable and immeasurably

⁶ In Luc. Hom. xi.

great. And as the hearts of kings, so also are the times and seasons in His own power: so that they should wait on each other in the fulfilment of Divine counsels. For we read "*And it came to pass, while they were there, that the days were fulfilled for her being delivered. And she brought forth her Son, the First-born. And she wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in the manger, for there was not room for them in the inn.*" Not having the means for paying for it which others had, at the time of so great a concourse. And thus even in the city of their father David were they as poor strangers: their lineage, which was thus remembered of God for His servant David's sake, afforded them no privilege or respect among men: so forgotten was David their king among the Jews, that respect for his memory could not obtain a human roof for his descendants. But a mansion it was well suited to His estate, Who throughout His life had not where to lay His head. It was a cave in the native city of David, according to the account of Justin Martyr, Origen, and others; for such the stables in that country often are. And thus as He was buried, so also was He born in a cave in the rock: that we may learn to hide ourselves in the rock till the tyranny be overpast. But these circumstances of our Lord's humiliation seem to have been accidental; and it may be observed, that through life the sufferings that our Lord endured seem often to have been owing, humanly speaking, to the force of contingencies. Yet perhaps none of these were altogether without the pride and persecution of men: for to such, the wanton pride of an ambitious Emperor, is owing the long and compulsory journey of the holy Mother at such a time, with much doubtless of privation and hardship; as it is thus

accidentally disclosed. And to such, the pride of man, was it owing that our Lord, of the seed of David, is born in a stable; for there were none in the inn disposed to give room to a poor and houseless woman, even on such an occasion.

It is here much worthy of observation, that there is one point of what may be esteemed human greatness, which appears not to have been set at nought by the example of our Lord. Although Christ took on Himself every shape of human shame and sorrow, extreme poverty, an evil name, humiliation, and pain, and ignominy, clothing Himself all over with them all, sanctifying them by taking them as His own portion; by which He appears setting at nought, and stamping its true value on all that is esteemed great by the world. But in one respect, even in human eyes, He is great, in His Royal extraction, as one of noble and of Princely birth. One thing He had which is considered gratifying even to worldly pride, in His earthly genealogy and lineage, in being born in descent from them who have been great because they have been good. There are, indeed, some in the line of opprobrious report, as Ruth, a Heathen woman, and Rahab of ill name, and Tamar; whereby He is supposed to take on Himself human shame; but even these are all lost in the lustre of the Royal line, and the shadow of Abraham and David resting upon all. For among those that had been born of women, who had been greater than Abraham? Who more illustrious than David, the unconquered Captain, the King, and Prophet, and "sweet Psalmist of Israel:" the Father of a long line of kings? In this one point, therefore, our Lord does not appear to have set aside that which is great in human eyes, by being born

of such high and glorious lineage. And as no truth stands isolated in Scripture, but in some way or other comes forth again and again, and is infused into the whole, so it is with this, for it is supported by many cognate and collateral circumstances. Thus nothing is of more frequent occurrence in the Old Testament history, than the mention which God makes of His keeping in memory forefathers, in order to bring thereby a blessing on their descendants; of His remembering thousands in them that love Him, and His mercy being vouchsafed to children's children. For Abraham's sake and for David's sake did He continue to bless the Jews throughout all their disobedience, for their sakes deferring His judgments and continuing His care. The benefit therefore of good lineage is not imaginary, but mysteriously connected with the secret dealings of Providence for good in after generations. Hence therefore it is, that men are led with an instinctive feeling, and are allowed with a sort of innocent pride to rejoice in their ancestors; and such feeling is after a faint image or resemblance of God's love for them being continued to their posterity. But this consideration, while it reflects worth on high and good lineage, speaks evil of high and evil lineage. For while wicked men indeed rejoice in ancestors even more wicked than themselves, and seize their names, and boast the insignia and heraldic bearings of their progenitors, who were notorious only for the greatness of their crimes, bringing down on their own souls the guilt and infatuation of the same; yet it may be observed in these cases, that the curse of God often works in a manner the least heeded, but the most awful of all, by carrying on in those successors the wicked principles of those wicked ancestors. For in

those who are humbled and abased at the sins of their forefathers, and boast them not, God also, according to His ways of mercy, remembers them not. But nevertheless, the good name of forefathers rests as a protecting shade on their descendants, they rejoice in its keeping, while its shadow remains on them fresh in the dews of God's blessing. If the name of Abraham threw its sheltering arm over his children, and the name of David was a tower of strength, such were but tokens and types of Him whose Name among all posterities is a city of refuge.

But if great was the human extraction of Him Who now lies as a helpless Infant in the stable, with no purple royalty, but poor and vile swaddling clothes; with no courtly attendants but the poor cattle of the stall, and they that waited on the poor herd; yet what was He in His Divine lineage? Faith leaves imagination and the sublimest thoughts the human soul is capable of far behind; for to conceive it rightly is to embrace the Infinite. And doubtless so far is it transcending, in the depth of the Divine compassions, all thought that man is capable of, that of this stupendous miracle of lowliness especially is it written, "As the Heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts⁷."

His Nativity of itself points as it were to the Crucifixion by the Infant finger of Christ, points from Bethlehem unto Calvary: both are equally planted in the depths of Divine lowliness. It might indeed be doubted, at which most of all Faith would delight to fix her habitation, at the cradle of His birth, or at the tree of

⁷ Isa. lv. 9.

His death: by His infant cries of helplessness, or at His dying lamentations⁸. The former speaks of the delights of innocence, of the tenderness of compassion, and the milk of human charities: the latter speaks of Divine consolation when innocence hath gone, of Divine compassions, and the blood of Divine remission overflowing human cruelty. The former hath more the hope of morning, fragile and human; the latter hath the hues of Divine charity, blended with the mysterious terrors of the unseen future. The former speaks of the curse of nature taken off, and a Birth without pain: the latter, of the travail pains of our Lord's agony before we can be born again in Him. The former speaks of the love and tenderness of childhood, hallowed to Divine affections, stretching forth its hands of compassion with infant tears to all mankind. The latter of early affections gone by, when patience hath had her perfect work, and experience hath brought forth that more stable hope that maketh not ashamed. Here virginal chastity may light her torch; there penitence may find a home. But both are in some measure alike; deep calleth unto deep in the sea of God's mercies: who can compare the morning with the evening light? The Cross is also in our thoughts blended with the Manger, and throws upon that also its own light of charity; as the sun at parting sheds his gleam on the place of his rising. The one hath more of vernal hope, the other of autumnal resignation: both most meet for man; both needful to support each other.

O wonderful abandonment! O inconceivable emptying of all greatness! the little Stranger is He whom the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain; He Who clotheth

⁸ See *The Passion*, p. 419.

all things with beauty by the emanation of His own light, is wrapt in hay-bands rude: He is in the manger, whose palace is the Heaven of Heavens. Words are weak, and thought fails, and can no more embrace what is infinite in the Divine compassions, than what is infinite in the Divine greatness. Even animal nature seems to partake of the overflowings of the same; it is in a stable; and sacred antiquity hath represented the ass and the ox as present there. Fulfilling thereby in the letter, the words of His Prophet⁹, and teaching us that where His love is, it will embrace also the brute creation in its tender charities. In this our brief sojourn of mortality, He hath set us on this earth as in an Inn, replete with all things needful for our comfort: but He hath Himself deigned to be in the out-house of that Inn; dwelling even as His own brute creatures, without human consolations and appliances.

“I am become weak, that I may gain the weak.” “He therefore,” says St. Ambrose, “was a little Infant, that thou mayest be able to be a perfect man. He was wrapped in swaddling clothes, that thou mayest be freed from the bands of death: He was in a manger, that thou mayest be at Altars: He was in earth, that thou mayest be in Heaven: He had no other place in that Inn, that thou mayest have more abundant mansions in the Heavenly habitation. He, ‘when He was rich, for our sake became poor, that we by His poverty might be made rich.’ That poverty therefore is my patrimony, and the weakness of the Lord is my strength. He preferred to be in want Himself, that all by Him might abound. The weeping of that crying Infant washed me: those tears have cleansed my offences. More there-

⁹ Isa. i. 3,

fore, O Lord Jesu, do I owe to Thy bereavement that I am redeemed, than to Thy works that I am created."

The year itself, with days that now begin to increase, seems to sympathize with the birth of the Lord, as at the time of the holy Baptist's birth the days began to wane. And thus the periods of the year themselves seemed, as it has been said, to set forth in type the expression of John the Baptist himself; "He must increase, but I must decrease;" the Baptist representing nature and the Law, and Christ opening the kingdom of grace and the Gospel. To this the turn of winter, and lengthening of the days at Christ's birth, Prudentius beautifully alludes in his Hymn.

"Why doth the Sun now leave on high
His circuit lessening day by day?
Is it that Christ along the sky
Brings in the Everlasting ray?

The wintry Day, with short-lived grace,
Hasten'd to wane and late arose;
As if his high ethereal race
Was verging gradual to a close.

Now let the sky be glad and bright,
And Earth responsive own the sign,
For step by step the opening light
Now climbs again his former line.

Emerge, thou gentle Little One,
Of stainless Mother born to earth
Free from all wedded union,
The Mediator's twofold birth.

What joys to the vast universe
In that chaste Maiden's womb are borne?
Ages set free from sorrow's curse
Spring forth, and everlasting morn.

That Infant cry with prelude deep
 Speaks of the world's eternal spring,
 From dark decay and wintry sleep
 Rising in new apparelling.

Methinks the Earth which feels Him nigh
 Breaks forth with flowers around His feet ;
 And desert sands of Araby
 With spikenard breathe and nectar sweet.

All things then felt Thee, Holy Child,
 E'en sternest natures own'd Thy power,
 And rugged crags, austere and wild,
 Served but to shade some rising flower.

Sweet honey now the rocks dispense,
 The rigid oak's dry stock distils
 The aromatic frankincense,
 And tamarisks the balsam fills.

Meek cradle! hallow'd manger ! when
 The King of the eternal halls
 Committed was to evil men,
 And to mute-gazing animals.

The Ox hath now his Master known,
 The Ass his crib of lowly birth :
 The Gentile too his Lord shall own
 Whose face now brute-like bends to earth.

Sinner, this hiding-place obscure,
 And cries of feeble Infancy,
 A Mother maid, a cradle poor,
 Have given thee One thy King to be.

Him once shalt thou behold again
 On clouds enthroned in majesty,
 Thyself cast down, and all in vain
 For unrepented sins shalt cry.

Then shall the mighty Trumpet call,
And summon forth the burning world,
The Universe's flaming wall
Sink on the earth in ruin hurl'd.

Then raised aloft, in glory bright,
He their deserts to all shall tell,
To these the everlasting light,
To those the never-ending Hell.

Judea then herself shall know
His light'ning Sign in Heaven reveal'd,
Shall see Him Whom her wrath below
Hath from her sight in death conceal'd."

Cathemerinon. Hymn x.

SECTION VIII

THE ANGELS AND SHEPHERDS

WHILE thus the God Who made the worlds, and holdeth the deep in the hollow of His hand, was born in want and obscurity, and in a stable; He chose also men of a lowly and similar condition in life to join the highest Heaven of Heavens in singing Hallelujahs at His birth. For if when the foundations of the world were laid, "the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy," much more when the pillars were laid of that "new Heaven and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness," shall they sing together; nor is it to be wondered at that on such an occasion they should make mankind also, for whose sake these great things were done, partakers of their joy, and take them into fellowship and communion of their jubilant Hymns, on this marvellous nativity. And thus the Pro-

phet joins the Heavens and the earth—for the earth is ever in nature responsive to the skies in partaking of their gloom or gladness—"Sing, O ye Heavens; for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains." "The morning stars" that "sang together," sent forth one to lead mankind to enter into their gladness; and the "sons of God" that "shouted for joy" have now called on those among men who may most aptly sympathize with Him Who is born in a stable. For whom among mankind should the Great God, now appearing as a helpless Babe, select for this purpose, but those little ones to whom the Kingdom is revealed? to whom should He first communicate the tidings of the coming of the great Shepherd, and of the true Lamb of God, but to these the types and symbols of His spiritual pastors? And moreover, humanly speaking, who should the Rod that springeth from the stem of Jesse, have more appropriate to celebrate His kingdom, than those shepherds who, like David of old, were tending their sheep by night; and perhaps in the same place where, by miraculous prowess of faith, he slew the lion and the bear, in type of what the true David, the good Shepherd Who layeth down His life for the sheep, should hereafter do, in destroying the power of him who, like "a roaring lion and ranging bear," "walketh about seeking whom he may devour." So mysteriously does God remember His saints, that in this He seems mindful of him, whom He "took away from the sheepfolds. As he was following the ewes great with young ones He took him; that he might feed Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance." In type of Him Who says, "Behold, I, even I, will both search My sheep, and seek them out; as a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered." "I

will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even My servant David : he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them." Descended from one who was once a despised shepherd of Bethlehem, to whom should He announce His coming, but to the lowly shepherds that were there ?

"And there were shepherds in that country abiding in the fields, and watching through the watches of the night over their flock. And behold, an Angel of the Lord came upon them, and the Glory of the Lord shone round about them." One ray of light broke in from the Heaven of Heavens, as if they could not contain themselves on that marvellous night, and the flood of glory issued forth through those impassable barriers which hide from our sight the heavenly beings that surround us ;—that same glory of which St. Paul spake, as being "at mid-day above the brightness of the sun." On Jacob's return to the Holy Land, the Angels of God met him at Mahanaim, as if unable even then to restrain their joy at his return, which spoke of good things to come ; much more should they now hail this approach of the kingdom. *"And they feared with great fear."* For such a manifestation is the prelude to that which is full of the most fearful of all fears, the second coming of Christ ; therefore every manifestation of Divine glory is terrible. But it was not now, as the guilty world might expect, that the windows of Heaven were opened, with the tempests of the Flood, nor with the fires of Sodom, nor with the terrors of Mount Sinai, but with sounds of sweetness and peace. *"And the Angel said unto them, Fear ye not ; for behold, I bear you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For there hath been born to you this day a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord, in the*

city of David. And this is to you the sign : ye shall find a Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, laid in a manger." All this was but the voice and the appearance of one Angel alone ; but no sooner were these words spoken, than the flood of joy which is in Heaven, overflowed around the Angel ; and he was lost with many others, visibly or sensibly disclosed to mortals, together with those unutterable harmonies which man hath not by ear heard nor in heart conceived. "*And suddenly there was with the Angel a multitude of the celestial army, praising God, and saying, Glory in the most high to God, and upon earth peace, among men good-will."* In these words was all the Gospel contained, and the mystery of Christ manifest in the flesh : thus, before His death did He and the Voice from Heaven speak of glorifying God ; thus did He leave His peace on His disciples as His last legacy ; and by His death did He seal good-will from God to man, and good-will towards each other among men. And the life of the Christian is to correspond with the same, in living to the glory of God, promoting peace on earth, and that good-will among men, which may be responsive to the good-will to men which God hath shown. It appears from the account that the light was seen, and the voices were heard, and not merely as in a dream ; a light which seemed to embrace themselves, for it shone around them, and voices so clear and marked, that the words could be distinguished and understood. No poetry or painting hath ever equalled this circumstance, as recorded in the simple and concise sublimity of the Divine narrative. Heaven opened upon earth ; the great Deliverer born, God come down to visit His creatures : light and sound in the darkness and silence of night ; in the solitary sheep-walks, while the rest of mankind were asleep : the spot where

David fed his sheep ; the sheep themselves, the emblems of all meekness : the stars in the distance seem to partake of consciousness ; while man throughout the globe is insensible of the approach of his great Deliverer. But the Heavens themselves from henceforth take up the strains, the commencement of those songs in Heaven, when "all His servants" shall praise God, "both small and great," "as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders," "for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready¹." And in faint echo here on earth doth the Catholic Church join "with Angels and Arch-angels, and with all the company of Heaven," when as it were in type below at the Eucharistic Table, "the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready."

"Like circles widening round
Upon a clear blue river,
Orb after orb, the wondrous sound
Is echoed on for ever."

"This day is born to you a Saviour !" All the saints of old were saviours to set forth the Saviour ; Noah was a saviour from the flood ; Joseph, from famine ; Abraham, from idolatry ; Moses, from Egyptian bondage ; Joshua, from Canaanitish enemies : but this is a Saviour from spiritual foes ;—"a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord ;"—"I, even I, am the Lord ; and beside Me there is no Saviour. I have declared, and have saved,—ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God. Yea, before the day was I am He²." This day is born to you a Saviour ; that which hath been always future is now present.

¹ Rev. xix. 5. 7.

² Isa. xliii. 11—13.

Ancient Time, from days of yore,
Eagerly hath bent before,
And hath watch'd the opening door.

Haste thou on, approaching morn,
And Thou, glorious Child, be born ;
Only hope of earth forlorn ³ !

"And it came to pass, when the angels were departed from them into Heaven, the men, the shepherds, said one to another, Let us go over unto Bethlehem, and see this great matter which hath taken place, which the Lord hath made known unto us." How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of them who bring good tidings, Angelical, Evangelical tidings. Hasten ye shepherds before the dawn, the Eastern sun is making preparation for His appearing ! As it was said of His eternal generation of old, so even now in some sense, His birth from the womb is as the dew of the morning ; yea, even now bright on the hills are the dews of the everlasting morn. Blessed and honoured above their fellows were these men of the field, to whom such a Divine communication was given, who alone upon earth have heard Angelic harmonies, and who showed themselves worthy of the same, by being "not disobedient to the Heavenly vision." *"And they hastened, and came, and found both Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger."* It might indeed, as some say, be translated stable, but as the mention of it always occurs as that of the place where the Holy Babe was laid, and not where His parents were, it seems that the common translation is right ; the word occurs three times in the Septuagint, where it is rendered in our version by the word "crib," as in the remarkable passage in the opening of Isaiah, said to be spoken of this occasion, and which might

³ Lat. Hymn. Par. Brev.

be thus rendered, "the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass the manger of the Lord ; but Israel hath not known Me ; and My people hath not comprehended Me." This place is supposed to have been a sort of out-house, not walled in, but a cave rudely enclosed for the protection of cattle ; and of course it might be understood that the Babe was there laid, while the parents themselves needed no other covering or shed but what was necessary for the Infant. A "crib" by which such animals are fed is perhaps now best rendered by the word "manger."

"And when they had seen it, they published abroad the saying which was told them concerning This Child." Nor need we be surprised that even this miraculous interposition produced no lasting impression which is on record, nor this publication of it here mentioned. It was probably among persons in their own station in life, and dwelling in the country, and not so as to have reached the people or the court at Jerusalem ; for such wonderful disclosures of the Divine dealings would soon, as they passed from the immediate eye-witnesses and narrators, be lost among superstitious tales with the inhabitants of a wild and mountainous region, where truth is indistinguishably blended with falsehood : so that even the greatest of Divine revelations would be but the subject of passing wonder. *"And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds."* Light cares, according to the Latin proverb, find utterance, vast ones are silent. Wonder and amazement will soon find a voice, when the immediate awe of the moment subsides ; but there are thoughts deeper in the heart, which it broods over in silence, breeding holy contemplations ; such as are not disclosed but in action, and diffused over the whole character.

"But Mary kept all these sayings, pondering," comparing, turning them over, *"in her heart."* Deeply interesting are these accounts of the state of mind of the blessed Virgin, as if unable to comprehend the depth of that dispensation to which she was ministering, and in awe and adoration contemplating the greatness of these mysteries, as they were being disclosed to her by little and little. And St. Ambrose seems to speak of this gathering up in her heart, and keeping secret the things of faith, as a part of her virgin modesty and chastity of spirit.

"And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God, for all the things which they had heard and seen, as it had been spoken unto them." There is no intimation given of the distance which their homes were from Bethlehem. It would seem from the account of the Evangelist, that the previous mention of their publishing abroad what was told them, and of the wonder occasioned by their statements, indicated what took place while they were at Bethlehem before their return

SECTION IX

THE CIRCUMCISION

"And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the Child, His Name was called Jesus, which was so named of the Angel before He was conceived in the womb" (Luke). He was circumcised on the eighth day, for the eighth is the coming in of that which is spiritual; the seven speaks of that which is temporal, the eighth of that which succeeds to it, which is eternal; the seven is of the Law; the eighth is of the

Gospel, and the Resurrection of Christ. The circumcision is the Gospel in secret and in mystery; for it was significative of the cleansing from sin, of the putting off the old man;—"the stripping off the old birth," as St. Athanasius calls it, and "the signs of the future Baptism through Christ." It was the type of that true circumcision in Christ which St. Paul speaks of, "a circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ; being buried with Him in Baptism:"—"the circumcision of the heart in the spirit, not in the letter." And therefore it was on the eighth day, the day of Christ's Resurrection, on which "the glowing gift of the full and perfect circumcision poured itself into the human breast." And as St. Cyril says, "On the eighth day Christ rose from the dead, and conveyed unto us a spiritual circumcision, saying, 'Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them.'"

It was therefore on the eighth day, to which the seventh day of the Law gave way, for the Sabbath was set aside in order that the eighth day of circumcision might be kept; on the seventh day the walls of Jericho fell down, that the Israelites might on that day enter into the enjoyment of their earthly Canaan; on the eighth day the Captain of our salvation, being made perfect through suffering, trampled under His feet all the power of the enemy. In token of which, even now, on the eighth day His garments are dyed with blood. "When the seven thunders have uttered their voices," the Angel which stands upon the sea and upon the earth, "lifted up his hand to Heaven, and swore by Him that liveth for ever and ever," "that there should be time no longer." In the days of the voice of the seventh Angel, the mys-

tery of God shall be finished ; when seven Angels had poured forth seven vials of wrath, there came a voice saying, "It is done⁴." Seven were the years of the Egyptian plenty, and seven the years of famine that ensued. Seven years did Jacob serve for his wives ; seven years for Leah, and seven for Rachel. Seven were the days of mourning for the dead ; seven months was the ark with the Philistines ; seven years was Solomon building the temple ; seven were the days of separation and legal uncleanness ; seven times did Naaman the unclean leper wash in Jordan⁵. The flood, the type of Christian Baptism, came after seven days of warning, and Noah the eighth person was saved : much more is circumcision then itself also, as the type of Baptism, on the eighth day, and fulfilled in Christ Who is the eighth Himself, the Resurrection, "the First and the Last." Thus of the first-born of oxen and sheep it is ordered, "seven days it shall be with his dam ;" on the eighth day "thou shalt give it Me." And in the Law it is said to the High Priest, "seven days shalt thou prepare a goat for a sin-offering," and "seven days shall they purge the altar," and "upon the eighth day the Priest shall make the peace-offerings, and I will accept them⁶." And what is the peace-offering that shall be accepted on the eighth day, but He Who is "our peace?" And what sacrifice shall be truly acceptable but the First-born? "Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy unto the Lord." But how holy? for as Job says, "how can he be clean who is born of a woman?" they were only holy in figure and type of Him of Whom the Angel said, "that Holy Thing which is born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

⁴ Rev. x. 6 ; xvi. 17.⁵ 2 Kings v. 14.⁶ Ezek. xliii. 27.

Now although there was in Christ no putting away the filth of the flesh which He had not, being without sin, yet was He Himself circumcised, in token that He was to fulfil the whole Law, being "born of a woman, born under the Law," for "every one that is circumcised is a debtor to fulfil the whole Law." He said of Himself, that it behoved Him "to fulfil all righteousness;" that He was come, "not to destroy the Law, but to fulfil;" and if we might say it with Origen, in some sense to destroy it by fulfilling it; destroying the legal circumcision by bringing in the true circumcision. As St. Ambrose says, "Bodily circumcision is the sign of spiritual circumcision; therefore the sign remained till the Truth had come. The Lord Jesus hath come, Who hath said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." He hath circumcised the whole man. "When that which is perfect is come, then that which was in part shall be done away." For it is written, "whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me!" This is the perfect circumcision; the redeeming of the soul by the offering up of the body⁷. And Origen also⁸; "Christ, in that He died, died for sin, not that He Himself had sinned,—for in Him was no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth; but He died, that we who were dead, by His dying might no longer live in sin. As therefore it is written that by His dying we are dead with Him, by His rising are risen with Him, so also with Him are we circumcised, and after circumcision cleansed with a solemn purgation. Whence we need not now a carnal circumcision. And that for our sakes He was circumcised, hear Paul most clearly testifying: 'In

⁷ De Abraham. lib. i. cap. iv. 29.

⁸ In Luc. Hom. xiv.

Him dwelleth,' saith he, 'all the fulness of the god-head bodily. And ye are complete in Him, which is the Head of all principality and power: in Whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands.'"

They who receive in Christ this spiritual circumcision, shall in Him also receive a new name according to the predestination of God, a name which is written in the Book of Life; being enrolled as citizens of the Heavenly Jerusalem. For after His circumcision He received His name, that Name at which "every knee shall bow;" and as He was born, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man," so also was He named, not by His earthly parents, "nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." They alone who are truly in the spirit circumcised with Him shall receive that incommunicable Name, by which they are known unto God: and as they partake of His circumcision, they shall partake also of that salvation which is in the Name of Jesus.

This circumcision therefore on the eighth day,—the day of the new Creation, made anew in the image of God,—is a sign of the Church of "the First-born, whose names are written in Heaven," of those who are of the spiritual circumcision, being crucified with Christ; typifying those who as little children are admitted into the kingdom of God, those to whom as babes mysteries are revealed; and the same also sanctifies the sufferings of childhood itself unto an excellent mystery. Few things are more moving than to witness the natural sufferings to which infants are especially subject; their first voice is the cry of pain, and their early age is beset with diseases: indicating, even in their comparative

innocence, the penalty derived from Adam, and marking the presence of sin. But still there is much that is mysterious in these sufferings: it is important to observe, that by this painful rite, Holy Scripture is, as in all things, responsive to the voice of nature; and both together seem to teach us, that there is something, as it were, sacramental in such sufferings; for such little ones are rendered thereby partakers of Christ's Cross, they have the badge of His elect: as they are made also sharers of His kingdom. Circumcision, moreover, is a sign of that painful training which childhood must undergo, of that mortification of the flesh and subjugation of the spirit, which must begin early and be continued, until they come "to the fulness of the stature of Christ;"—that stature which is in the fulness of pain, which is stretched out upon the Cross; which is to drink more fully of His cup; to suffer with Him, that they may reign together: having the whole body of sin mortified and crucified "together with Him."

SECTION X

THE GENEALOGIES

THE Circumcision of our Lord, at which He received His human Name, affords a suitable opportunity for introducing the two Genealogies; as it is not so convenient in an harmony to adhere to either of the places where they occur in the two Evangelists; and this affords an intermediate opportunity for combining the two. In St. Matthew it occurs at the opening of his Gospel, as in writing to the Jews it was his first object to show that

He was that promised Messiah, in Whom the Covenant to Abraham and to David was fulfilled; the Seed of Abraham, the father of the faithful, to whom the promises of the Church were given; and the kingly Heir of David, to whom Christ Himself was promised;—Abraham being both priest and prophet; and David both prophet and king: and Christ combining in Himself the offices of the two. But David, as he to whom Christ is promised, is, as St. Ambrose supposes, mentioned before Abraham, as he to whom the Church alone is promised. St. Matthew traces the descent from Abraham and David, as an Israelite would naturally do, following downwards the course of the Divine covenant and lineage. But as St. Luke is writing to the Gentiles, when at our Lord's Baptism, He is declared by a Voice from Heaven to be the Son of God, it is then suitable to show to all mankind His lineage up to Adam, to whom the first promise was made, as being Himself the Second Adam, in Whom it is fulfilled. This affords an obvious reason for the difference of place which the Genealogy occupies in the two; and explains why in St. Matthew it should descend in the downward line, and that not from Adam but from Abraham; and why in St. Luke, it should ascend upward, and not to Abraham only, but to Adam and to God,—the Father of all mankind, as received and adopted by Him; and His reconciled children in Jesus Christ. But independently of this diversity of arrangement, in the place which the lineage occupies, and the opposite order of descent and ascent, when we come to compare the two together we find other points of distinction. There are four different parts into which the entire line and order may be broken and classified. The first is

the line from Adam to Abraham, which occurs in St. Luke only, and therefore is free from all difficulty or diversity. The second is the lineage between Abraham and David, in which the two Evangelists mainly coincide. The third is the continuation from David to the Captivity, in which the two lines are quite distinct throughout. In the fourth division, from the Captivity to Christ, the names are also quite different, except in the mention of two persons on the return from captivity, in which they coincide.

St. Matthew's Gospel begins at once with this proof of the Messiah. "*The Book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.*" As the book of Genesis received its name from the creation of the world, which occupies only the first part of the first chapter, it seems suitable and expressive that the life of our Lord should be designated by the same name, "the book of" His "generation," although His lineage and birth only occupies, in like manner, the commencement of that Gospel. From this therefore, St. Matthew proceeds with the descent down from Abraham. But as both Evangelists coincide in mentioning Abraham, we may perhaps pass from this point into the genealogy of Abraham, in the very order and series in which it is given by St. Luke, who in tracing the line upwards, when he comes to Abraham, proceeds by adding, "who was" the son "of Thara."

"The son of Abraham" (Matt. Luke), "*of Thara, of Nachor, of Saruch, of Ragau, of Phalec, of Heber, of Sala, of Cainan.*" It is remarkable that the name of Cainan is not found in the Hebrew Scriptures, either in the book of Genesis or in the Chronicles, but it occurs in the Septuagint version. "*Of Arphaxad, of Sem, of*

Noe, of Lamech, of Mathusala, of Enoch, of Jared, of Maleleel, of Cainan, of Enos, of Seth, of Adam, of God" (Luke). The construction of the Greek would allow the words "which was the son of" to intervene between each of these successive names; some indeed would understand "Christ Which was the son of" to be supplied to each successively: but this seems a forced interpretation. We must therefore consider the last clause to signify Adam the son of God; for Adam and all mankind are in Christ adopted sons of God. "God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, that He might redeem those who are under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons⁹." It is remarkable that the whole of St. Luke's genealogy has been supposed to be by the line of Law and adoption through Eli, the adopted or legal father of Joseph: and indeed, the term "begat" in St. Matthew is more strongly expressive of natural generation. And thus, in wonderful condescension to man, does He reckon Himself as the son of Adam, and as such the Son of God, in whose likeness Adam was made, and to which likeness we are to be restored in Christ: saying again, or fulfilling in ample meaning the saying of the Father, "let Us make man in Our own Image." For all are in Adam sons of God by nature, but having lost that natural sonship, we are made the sons of God by grace and adoption in the Second Adam, Who "of His own will begat us by the word of truth, that we might be a sort of first-fruits of His creatures¹⁰."

Thus have we the order of generation from Abraham up to Adam, as it occurs in St. Luke alone. In the next place we have the line from Abraham down to David, as in St. Matthew, and from David up to Abraham, as in

⁹ Gal. iv. 4.

¹⁰ James i. 18.

St. Luke ; and except from this diversity of the ascending and descending scale in the mode of narrating, there occurs no material discrepancy. By transposing the order in St. Luke the two will run thus,—

<i>Abraham begat Isaac ;</i>	.. <i>Abraham</i>
	.. <i>Isaac ;</i>
<i>Isaac begat Jacob ;</i>	.. <i>Jacob ;</i>
<i>Jacob begat Judas and his</i>	
<i>brethren ;</i>	.. <i>Juda ;</i>
<i>And Judas begat Phares</i>	
<i>and Zara of Thamar ;</i>	.. <i>Phares ;</i>
<i>Phares begat Esrom ;</i>	.. <i>Esrom ;</i>
<i>Esrom begat Aram ;</i>	.. <i>Aram ;</i>
<i>And Aram begat Aminadab ;</i>	.. <i>Aminadab ;</i>
<i>Aminadab begat Naasson ;</i>	.. <i>Naasson ;</i>
<i>Naasson begat Salmon ;</i>	.. <i>Salmon ;</i>
<i>Salmon begat Booz,</i>	
<i>of Rachab ;</i>	.. <i>Booz ;</i>
<i>Booz begat Obed,</i>	
<i>of Ruth ;</i>	.. <i>Obed ;</i>
<i>And Obed begat Jesse ;</i>	.. <i>Jesse ;</i>
<i>And Jesse begat David,</i>	
<i>the King (Matt.).</i>	.. <i>David (Luke).</i>

In this catalogue there is little diversity, and only that of addition in St. Matthew ; but this which occurs, may furnish occasion for one or two remarks. St. Matthew seems, as it were, to go out of his way to introduce the mention of three women, as also of another afterwards ; and these four women are, it may be observed, lying under reproach. Thamar, one guilty of incest, sitting to deceive in the attire of an harlot ; Rahab known as “the harlot,” and one of the accursed City ; and Ruth,

the Moabitish woman; and a fourth instance afterwards occurs in the words "of her that had been the wife of Urias," the adulteress. And doubtless, we may well suppose, with St. Chrysostom, St. Ambrose, and St. Jerome, that as Christ came to carry our shame and sin, for this cause did He set forth these stains in His lineage. "For He was born," says St. Chrysostom on this passage, "not to escape our dishonours, but to bear them away." Perhaps also it may have been in order to show to the Jews, that even their forefathers were in sin; for if He is of the Patriarchal and Royal line, yet even from Judah it is by Tamar; and even from David it is by an adulteress. But we may see also in it a higher mystery; for as most of the remarkable women in the Old Testament were types of the Church, which has been taken from unclean Heathenism; guilty before of incest and abominable adulteries; but accepted of God and washed clean, to bear spiritual sons unto God, being clothed with the Sun, and cleansed as by fire of the Holy Ghost. "As those of old," says St. Chrysostom¹, "took harlots for wives, even so God espoused unto Himself the nature which had played the harlot." As Booz did Ruth, so hath Christ received the Church, an alien and in much poverty, and abhorred not her low estate. "Forget thine own people and thy father's house, so shall the King have pleasure in thy beauty." What is said moreover of David is often intended of Christ, "I have found David My servant, with My holy oil have I anointed him:" as such He is married to the Church of the Synagogue, unclean and an adulteress, as she is so often described, "committing adultery with stocks and stones."

¹ Hom. in Matt. iii. 5.

or as Tamar of old, attiring herself as an harlot, and "trimming her way to seek love²." Such may be also types of our Lord's human mother (as indeed most types of the Church are), representing His unspeakable condescension, in having taken one from the unclean seed of Adam, lying under the wrath of God. The mention also of these women by St. Matthew may fall in with St. Augustin's consideration, that St. Matthew records Christ as bearing our sins; St. Luke as atoning for them³. "Luke," says St. Ambrose, "has avoided the mention of them, that he might set forth the Priestly race without sin." And we may see in this the infinite compassions of God, that His Church should be set forth under such types of former uncleanness till washed by Him; for who is there who must not use of himself the affecting exclamation of St. Ambrose⁴, when he takes up the expression of Judah concerning Tamar, and so often emphatically repeats, "she is more righteous than I?"

The other points of diversity in this catalogue, however apparently slight, are not without great and divine purport. To the name of "Judas" St. Matthew adds, "and his brethren," comprehending thereby all the sacred nation for whom he wrote; of whose lineage according to the flesh Christ came; the twelve pillars of Christ's kingdom, supporting His throne, the twelve tribes out of which, as in the Revelation, His Redeemed are sealed. And to the name of "David" he adds "the king," as it was his especial object to point out the kingdom of the Messiah, of Whom it is said, "and I will give unto Him the throne of His Father David."

² Jer. ii. 33.

³ Study of the Gospels, p. 59.

⁴ De Pœnit. lib. ii. cap. viii.

Why Zara should be added as well as Phares, may be questioned: but all must allow it to be with some great and hidden meaning. St. Chrysostom, Ambrose, and others, reasonably suppose it to contain the mystery of the two people, the Jew and the Gentile, alluding to the remarkable circumstances recorded of their birth, and of the struggle in the womb which should have the primogeniture, of whom Christ should be born: and the almost doubtful issue of their claims. Zara, which signifies "the East," comes first, and is marked by the scarlet thread, and retires for Phares, which signifies "division" or the "breach." Patriarchal piety, which is from the East, saw afar the day of Christ, and was glad, being bound with the scarlet thread, having received the promise, and retired; then came the Law, the separation and "division" preceding, and of whom Christ is born; but "the East" shall follow. Grace or Faith in anticipation appeared to be coming forth; but the Law intervened, and Christ was born under the Law⁵. But "the East" is also Christ Himself, slain indeed before the foundation of the world; but manifested in the fulness of time, in the calling of all mankind; for the "division" caused by the Law had separated one people for a time, when He Himself, the repairer of the "breach," appears.

But now the next scale in the descent, from David to the Captivity, is entirely different, as may be seen by the juxtaposition of the two Evangelists. In order to do so we must again change the order of St. Luke. Now though the discrepancy may be naturally accounted for by supposing the two to be taken from two different

⁵ See Chrys. Hom. in Matt. ii. Hom. in Gen. lxii., and Ambrose in Luc. lib. iii. 29.

public records of genealogy, through two distinct lines, yet this leaves the matter still unexplained with regard to any Divine purpose, or practical instruction contained in such a variation. From David it proceeds,—

*David the King begat Solomon, of
her that had been the wife of*

<i>Urias ;</i>	<i>.. Nathan ;</i>
<i>Solomon begat Roboam ;</i>	<i>.. Mattatha ;</i>
<i>Roboam begat Abia ;</i>	<i>.. Menan ;</i>
<i>Abia begat Asa ;</i>	<i>.. Melea ;</i>
<i>Asa begat Josaphat ;</i>	<i>.. Eliakim ;</i>
<i>Josaphat begat Joram ;</i>	<i>.. Jonan ;</i>
<i>Joram begat (Ochozias ;</i>	<i>.. Joseph ;</i>
<i>Ochozias begat Jonan ;</i>	<i>.. Juda ;</i>
<i>Jonan begat Amasias ;</i>	<i>.. Simeon ;</i>
<i>Amasias begat) Ozias ;</i>	<i>.. Levi ;</i>
<i>Ozias (or Azarias) begat Joatham ;</i>	<i>.. Matthat ;</i>
<i>Joatham begat Achaz ;</i>	<i>.. Jorim ;</i>
<i>Achaz begat Ezekias ;</i>	<i>.. Eliezer ;</i>
<i>Ezekias begat Manasses ;</i>	<i>.. Jose ;</i>
<i>Manasses begat Amon ;</i>	<i>.. Er ;</i>
<i>Amon begat Josias ;</i>	<i>.. Elmodan ;</i>
<i>Josias (begat Joachim⁶ ;</i>	<i>.. Cosam ;</i>
<i>Joachim) begat Jechonias and his</i>	<i>.. Addi :</i>
<i>brethren about the time that</i>	<i>.. Melchi ;</i>
<i>they were carried away to</i>	<i>.. Neri.</i>
<i>Babylon. (Matt.)</i>	<i>(Luke.)</i>

There is no son of Josias named Jechonias recorded in Scripture, and therefore St. Ambrose, Augustin, and others, have supposed that Jechonias may be another name for Joachim, the second son of Josias, and indeed it so occurs in the book of Esdras⁷, and that there was

⁶ 1 Chron. iii. 16.

⁷ 1 Esd. i. 37.

a father and son of the same name. It is of course an easy supposition, and mentioned by Epiphanius, that the word Jechonias twice occurring, or words very similar, as Joachim and Jechonias, should one of them be dropped by the error of transcribers. But St. Augustin argues on another supposition, that Jechonias is the same person twice mentioned here and afterwards. It has been also suggested that Joachim is not mentioned, because he was made king by Pharaoh, king of Egypt: and there is certainly great reason for this opinion, as in a former instance three names are omitted between Joram and Ozias, for which the reason assigned by St. Hilary, on this passage, and by others is, that they were of the seed of Ahab, on the mother's side, and therefore dead in the sight of God: according to the judgment pronounced by the Prophet Elijah.

Thus far, therefore, it is evident that the descent from David to the Captivity is throughout two distinct courses of genealogy: but they are now found on the return from Babylon to emerge in one person: but only to combine the same for three generations; when the lines are again perfectly distinct, till they correspond in the person of Joseph.

And after they were brought to Babylon

<i>Jechonias begat Salathiel ;</i>	<i>.. Salathiel ;</i>
<i>Salathiel begat Zorobabel ;</i>	<i>.. Zorobabel ;</i>
<i>Zorobabel begat Abiud ;</i>	<i>.. Rhesa ;</i>
<i>Abiud begat Eliakim ;</i>	<i>.. Joanna ;</i>
<i>Eliakim begat Azor ;</i>	<i>.. Juda ;</i>
<i>Azor begat Sadoc ;</i>	<i>.. Joseph ;</i>
<i>Sadoc begat Achim ;</i>	<i>.. Semei ;</i>
<i>Achim begat Eliud ;</i>	<i>.. Mattathias ;</i>
<i>Eliud begat Eleazar ;</i>	<i>.. Maath ;</i>

<i>Eleazar begat Matthan ;</i>	<i>.. Nagge ;</i>
<i>Matthan begat Jacob ;</i>	<i>.. Esli ;</i>
	<i>.. Naum ;</i>
	<i>.. Amos ;</i>
	<i>.. Mattathias ;</i>
	<i>.. Joseph ;</i>
	<i>.. Janna ;</i>
	<i>.. Melchi ;</i>
	<i>.. Levi ;</i>
	<i>.. Matthat ;</i>
	<i>.. Heli ;</i>
<i>And Jacob begat Joseph, the</i>	<i>.. Joseph, of whom</i>
<i>husband of Mary, of whom</i>	<i>Jesus</i>
<i>was born Jesus, Who is</i>	<i>was supposed to be</i>
<i>called Christ (Matt.).</i>	<i>the Son (Luke).</i>

The reason for this entire difference in the two lines is not evident, nor is there any account adequately supported by opinions of weight, beyond the general supposition that one adheres to the natural, the other to the legal descent, or one to the Regal, the other to the Sacerdotal line. It seems a reasonable explanation to suppose that Jechonias begat Salathiel by the daughter of Neri, who was the son of David through the line of Nathan, as Jechonias was through that of Solomon. So the genealogy of St. Luke, together with the other, serves to show the genealogy of David through the twofold line of Solomon and Nathan. And although sons of Jechonias are mentioned in Scripture*, yet as it was divinely said of him, "write this man childless*," whether this was literally fulfilled, or only an expression of the Divine displeasure on his line, it may be a reason why the sacred genealogy should pass into a line more worthy of

* 1 Chron. iii. 17.

* Jer. xxii. 30; xxxvi. 30.

the promise, as an undercurrent more pure. In confirmation of this, it is said that it was provided by David, that on the failure of the line of Solomon, it was to pass into that of Nathan. And the reason why Jechonias's "brethren" are mentioned may be,—not only because they also were kings of Judah, as Joanan for three, and Zedekiah for eleven months,—but in order to separate the line from the posterity of one on whom the denunciation was passed, of his being written "childless;" for what less could this signify, than that the Child expected on the throne of David should be of another line? For if in one case the three generations mixed with the race of Ahab, on whom the curse was, are not mentioned by St. Matthew, in like manner St. Luke passes over to another line, from that king of whom it was said, "Write this man childless;"—or "no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David¹." And all this, perhaps, according to some secret mysterious sense; for if St. Luke numbers not the kings, it may be because Christ's kingdom is not of this world, but more in secret, in the sense in which the throne of David is spoken of, as when it is said, "His seed shall remain for ever;" in the sense in which the Angel said to Mary, "He shall give unto Him the throne of His father David."

"So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations" (Matt.). It is here evident that St. Matthew does not attempt to give an exact genealogy, but such as may be sufficient in each case to support the general

¹ See Ambrose in Luc. lib. iii. 46.

division of fourteen generations under each head. By the mention of which he seems to indicate some mysterious dispensation that regulated these things; and doubtless, there is some secret sense in such numbers and divisions. We may observe that each of these fourteen are distinct dispensations of God; the first under Patriarchs and Judges; the second under Kings; the third under Priests and Governors; as the three missions until Christ comes, set forth in the Parable of the Vineyard. As we find numbers have affinities between their natural and sacred significations (as twelve Apostles make up the Church, and twelve months the Year), the observation of Maldonatus is remarkable; that in fevers the fourteenth day is considered by physicians as critical, and implies a change for good or evil. So in each of these periods there is a great change, and in the last the old nature is dead, and Christ the New Man comes. "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him." This Scriptural intimation in the number seven has been before shown². A repetition also three times is usually supposed to designate mystery.

It may further be observed, that according to the exact number (of 3×14),—considering that Jechonias is not twice mentioned, but as St. Jerome thinks, that the first mentioned is the same as Joachim, and the second his son; and taking in the name of Christ;—it will be forty and two. Now the number forty and two seems to signify the wrath of God abiding, before it be taken away by Christ's appearing. Thus in the Revelation, for "forty-two months" the holy City shall be trodden under foot³. And power is given unto Antichrist for "forty and two months⁴." Forty and

² See p. 99.

³ Rev. xi. 2.

⁴ Dan. xii. 5.

two children were destroyed for mocking Elisha: which seems some mysterious warning against those who shall blaspheme the Holy Spirit. Forty-two were the journeys of the Israelites in the wilderness⁵, which St. Jerome applies to these forty-two generations, saying, of the forty-two in St. Matthew, "through these runs the true Hebrew, who hastens to pass from earth to Heaven; and having left the Egypt of the world, entereth the land of promise. And no wonder that in the mystery of this number we arrive at the kingdom of Heaven; for in this number the Lord and Saviour cometh down from the first Patriarch to the Virgin, as to the Jordan which overflowed with the grace of the Spirit⁶." But St. Augustin comments on the supposition that in the entire number forty only (omitting Christ, and supposing Jechonias to be the same repeated), and not forty-two, are specified. Which number "forty," of course, designates as usual the period of human humiliation and suffering, until the Day-star shall arise, and the manifestation of God; which the Law and the Prophets signified by the fast of Moses and Elias, and the Gospel by that of Christ, for "forty days." St. Matthew therefore, recording the human extraction of the King, specifies forty generations. And those generations are in St. Matthew's catalogue marked with legal uncleanness, as forty are the days of purification. If moreover the number forty signifies mortification and tribulation, so must we "through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God;" and the King Himself is in the meanwhile to rule "with a rod of iron," "scourging every son whom He receiveth," until that coming in of the new king-

⁵ Numb. xxxiii.

⁶ De Quadrag. duab. mansion. Epist. cxxvii.

dom in which all enemies shall be put under His feet. And St. Chrysostom, likewise, seems to suppose the number to be forty, and not forty-two, for he speaks of only twelve being put in the last place instead of fourteen, taking the Captivity as occupying the place of one of that number, and Christ Himself the other. St. Augustin, in like manner, goes on to notice, that the number recorded in St. Luke, taking in the name of God at the first, and that of Christ at the last in the catalogue, the number will be seventy and seven, which signifies remission of sins, the subject of St. Luke's Gospel: for the Lord Himself shows, that by the number seven is signified the infinite mercy of God, in commanding us to forgive seventy times seven.

Here we find every thing consistent throughout, in the opinion of St. Augustin, who considers them both as lines from Joseph; that St. Matthew mentions the real progenitors according to the flesh; St. Luke the adopted and reputed relatives of Joseph. And to the reasons for the latter, this also may be added, that Christ Himself was as the reputed and adopted son of Joseph: as we are also in Him the adopted and reputed sons of God. St. Matthew therefore mentions natural parents, according to the flesh: St. Luke reputed and adopted, according to the Law. The reputed son of Joseph is the commencement; the adopted Son of God the close. Again; as the genealogy in St. Matthew is from the Birth, women are mentioned: in St. Luke from the Baptism, and they are omitted: St. Matthew descends as pointing out Christ to the Jews: St. Luke ascends as showing the restoration of man to God. St. Matthew shows that Christ was the promised King of the Jews through Solomon. St. Luke, that He was

also through Nathan the Son of David. In St. Matthew, if we may so say, the fathers are reconciled unto their children, while he brings them down unto Christ; in St. Luke the children are reconciled unto their fathers, while they bring Christ up with them to Adam and God: so that both genealogies combined fulfil the office of Elijah, and prepare the way for Christ.

Introduced at the natural birth by St. Matthew, it is all of humiliation and humanity. Introduced at the Baptism by St. Luke, it is all mysteriously replete with the New Birth and Baptismal adoption; introduced at Christ's own Baptism, whereby we in Him, and He in us, are adopted children of the Father, restoring Adam to his first sonship, and the image of God. Our Lord descends through the stock of Solomon, of whom evil is written, and through others marked with sin, as bearing our inheritance of shame: but He ascends through the line of adoption, as one said to be, but not being in truth, the son of Joseph, through Nathan, of whom no evil is written,—passing by Jechonias as cut off from that high inheritance by God's word,—unto Adam, as he was before the fall, and is again in Christ, the son of God. And Adam also was a type of Christ. Adam was made of the ground without seed; Christ was supernaturally born of God. In Adam Christ was predestined to be born; and to Adam promised. "The first man is of the earth earthy; the Second Man is the Lord from Heaven."

But here it may be asked, how is it that the extraction from Joseph should be given at all, when he was not the real parent of our Lord? There may be something mysterious in the matter beyond our comprehension. It is alluded to by St. Ignatius, Chrysostom, and

others, that our Lord's being born of a Virgin was one of the secret things not made known to the Jews, and wrapt in impenetrable mystery from evil spirits. And it may be, moreover, according to the Hebrew custom, not to give the genealogy of the woman: but as Joseph was of "the house and lineage of David," and it was not lawful for them to marry out of their tribe; and as Joseph was "a just man" and keeper of the Law, it would be equivalent to her genealogy. St. Ambrose mentions it as the Scriptural custom, to give the genealogy of the man, as of Elkanah⁷, the husband of Hannah, though she was most known as the mother of Samuel. "For," says St. Ambrose, "being born according to the flesh, the custom of the flesh must needs be followed, and He Who came into the world must be described according to the custom of the world; especially since the origin of Joseph is that of Mary also, as marrying her who was of his kindred according to the Law; and with her, therefore, expressly Joseph goes to be enrolled⁸." Such indeed seems to be the opinion of all ancient writers, from St. Irenæus to St. Jerome; that the fact being well known that they were of the same family, and next of kin, the Evangelists not only give the extraction of the man, according to the Jewish custom, but do not even at the end of it specify Mary as the link between the progenitor and Christ—but Joseph. Although St. Matthew does indeed at the end add, "the husband of Mary, of whom was born Christ," as specifying the reason of the genealogy. Whereas both of these Evangelists record the Divine conceptions; so that there must be some reason for their both substituting Joseph for Mary: and their being nearest of kin is the most obvious

⁷ 1 Sam. i. 1.

⁸ In Luc. lib. iii. 4.

and most generally received interpretation. To this it may be added, that "the head of the woman is the man," and they are "both one flesh," according to the Divine Law by marriage, although not as parents of Christ. And it is of a piece with all this, that St. Luke in other places speaks of Joseph as the father of our Lord; as where he says, "and His parents went up yearly to Jerusalem," and He "was subject unto them," and even in the mouth of the blessed Virgin, "Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." And St. Luke does not speak of Mary going up to be taxed at Bethlehem, because she was "of the house and lineage of David," but of Joseph going up "together with her." Whatever reasons there may have been for our Lord being born not only of a Virgin, but of one betrothed, and having a legal husband, the same may be the reason in the unfathomable Divine counsels, why the genealogy should be by the husband. And in her particularly might it be fulfilled, "he is to thee a covering of the eyes⁹." It is remarkable that it is by the Angel especially that Mary is spoken of as the wife of Joseph, "fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife." But, as St. Hilary observes, when Mary is spoken of together with Joseph, it is often as the mother of our Lord, not as his wife, as in St. Matthew, "take the Child and Mary His mother, and fly into Egypt," and "return with the Child and His mother;" and in St. Luke, "Joseph and His mother knew not of it." In all which he appears but as the guardian of the Holy Child.

All this is upon the supposition that both pedigrees are those of Joseph. The most obvious explanation of the discrepancy between the two, and which must occur

⁹ Gen. xx. 16.

to every one, is that one is the genealogy of St. Mary. It would appear not unreasonable to suppose, that if St. Matthew gives the genealogy of the man according to the Hebrew custom; that St. Luke being more free from such observances, should give the extraction of St. Mary: and the more so as this Evangelist introduces so much respecting her. And indeed St. Augustin mentions it as an opinion which he did not disapprove of, that Heli, recorded by St. Luke, was the father-in-law of St. Joseph, and the father of the blessed Virgin. But the very obviousness and reasonableness of this opinion renders it probable that it is not the true one, for the Fathers mention generally another explanation, although this must have occurred to them. The opinion prevalent among the ancients, and mentioned by Africanus as one that received the sanction of our Lord's kindred, is this, that Jacob and Heli were maternal brothers; but the one dying without issue, the other married his wife, "to raise up seed to his brother." Joseph therefore, the offspring of this marriage, was the legal son of the one, and the natural son of the other: perhaps the legal son of Heli; but St. Ambrose takes it the reverse. This however is supposed to account for the two different lines, humanly speaking: whatever greater Divine purpose there may also be contained in the circumstance.

SECTION XI

THE COMING OF THE MAGI

THERE is great uncertainty as to the time when the Wise men appeared. Some suppose this event to have taken

place many months after our Lord's birth ; and some even two years, among whom are Eusebius and Epiphanius. If either of these opinions were adopted, it would require no further change in this Harmony, than to place this narrative after the Purification ; for the only question here necessary to be decided is, which of these events is to precede the other ; and it is necessary to state the reasons for here placing it after the Circumcision and before the Purification. There seems no reason for the last opinion stated above, but the age of the Infants slain by Herod, which is said to be of "two years old and under," "after he had diligently inquired of the Wise men." Whereas there is every reason to believe, that such an act of fury was carried on in much ignorance ; all that is stated is, that he inquired carefully of the Wise men, not when the Child was born, for that they could not tell, but when "the star appeared." Nor is it said how soon after he slew the infants ; nor would the bounds of such an act of insane cruelty be any point to depend on. Some, indeed, understand it, not that the star had appeared for two years, but that Herod added two years to the time he had accurately ascertained of the star, for greater security : in like manner as to the place of Bethlehem, he added for the same reasons all the boundaries thereof. Such an opinion would, moreover, imply that the holy parents continued to reside for two years at Bethlehem, and had not returned to Nazareth ; which it must be allowed derives some probability from their thinking of returning to Judea, on coming back from Egypt ; but there is no evidence to support it besides this circumstance. And what St. Luke says immediately after the Purification, of their returning to Nazareth, would seem to indicate at least their intention of returning to Nazareth, but for the intervention of the flight into Egypt.

rather than the continued sojourn in Bethlehem. The offerings of the holy Mother at the Purification, which indicated poverty, might afford a reason to infer, that they had not then been enriched by the presents of the eastern Kings ; but on the whole of this subject, and of the nature of those offerings of the Wise men, we are in such ignorance, that no argument can be founded upon it : piety itself would suggest to us, that those presents would be considered by the holy parents as sacred and set apart to God : and, therefore, an indication of their poverty is no proof that they had not then been visited by the Magians. At all events, in the absence of further evidence, it seems better to adhere to the traditional usage in the Western Church, which has always commemorated this event on the twelfth or thirteenth day ; and there is the combined authority of both St. Chrysostom and St. Augustin for adhering to this time. Chrysostom speaks throughout of their finding the Child in His swaddling clothes and the manger : he supposes that the appearance of the star preceded our Lord's birth by two years ; and that it was thus divinely ordered that they should appear at the very Birth : that the wrath and dread of Herod for greater security added to the time, that none might escape ; and that all he had ascertained was the period of the star appearing, not of the Child's birth. St. Augustin, in like manner, seems to take it for granted, that their coming was at this time, and that after the appearance of the Magi the attention of Herod had been turned to other objects, till the subject was again brought before his notice, by the sensation occasioned in Jerusalem at the presentation in the temple.

The Scriptural account affords no definite clue to the exact time, as it states the whole occurrence in a general

manner: "*Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king.*" St. Matthew does not even allude to the cause that had brought the Holy Family to Bethlehem, nor afford any intimation that it was not their usual place of abode; "*behold!*"—the very word "*behold*" appears to intimate the circumstance as occurring at the immediate time of His birth;—"behold, *Magi from the East were come to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews?*" He of whom it is written, "the Gentiles shall come to Thy light, and kings to the brightness of Thy rising." "*For we have seen His star in the East,*"—not a star that indicates His birth, but one peculiarly His own, and unlike other stars. "*And have come to worship Him.*" Not to do obeisance only to Him as a King; for what had these Magi from the distant East to do with a mere King of Judea? but moved and guided by a Divine impulse within, as by a Divine star without, unto that great King Whose sovereignty is in the hearts of men; they had come to pay their adoration unto Him as God, and then to return. We have seen His star "*in the East,*" for the East is in some mysterious way connected with Christ; He is Himself called the East; He is to arise as the Sun of Righteousness, with healing in His wings (and this figure marks out the East); He says of Himself, "*I am the root and offspring of David; and the bright and morning Star*¹." From the East He called Abraham; and the custom in ancient Liturgies has descended even to our own Church of turning to the East; but we, as they of old, know not why this has been taught; but there has ever been in the Church a mysterious expectation of Christ that turns to the East. The East

¹ Rev. xxii. 16.

is first stirred at His coming, God hath not forgotten Abraham His servant; a thousand years are with Him as one day; and it may be that the family of Abraham, once left in idolatry, are the first brought by faith to acknowledge his true seed. Great men were they, no doubt, in the East, for the Magi of Persia, as Maldonatus observes, were as the Philosophers among the Greeks, the Pontifices in Italy, the Brachmins in India, Chaldeans in Babylon, Hierophants in Egypt, Druids in Gaul. Priestly therefore, probably, in office, as also of Kingly dignity and Princely station; as indeed their coming to Herod the king, and their mode of acceptance indicate. Such the Fathers very generally consider them, perhaps in consequence of the expressions in the Old Testament, such as "the kings of Arabia and Saba shall bring gifts." As God moved the heart of Abraham, as He stirred up Cyrus to build His temple, as He prepared the East by the captive Israelites, by Daniel and others; so now does He prepare the hearts of kings, which are in His hand. As the Queen of the South, and as the men of Nineveh, so are these also brought nigh to stand in the judgment with this generation.

Far therefore in the East was this star seen; and by whom should it be seen but by those Chaldean sages, whose studies made them conversant with the Heavenly bodies? For stars they worshipped as Gods: stars they supposed to preside over the births and the comings of kings². And here may be seen the great tenderness and compassionate condescension of God, that as these Magi were given to astrology and the worship of the Heavenly bodies, yet through their own superstition God is pleased to lead them unto Himself; not that they might continue

² Ecce Dionæi processit Cæsaris astrum. Virg.

in the same, but that He might lead them by those things out of these vanities to things more worthy of Himself. By the calling of each God calls them, even when He would have them leave the same; the Apostles by a draught of fishes. Astrologers by the stars. This He has often done, as St. Chrysostom observes; in like manner did St. Paul teach the Athenians, taking occasion from that "unknown God," whom they ignorantly worshipped; thus the Ark was sent back to Israel by the five cities of the Philistines, through the advice of their own soothsayers, who were the instruments of prophecy: thus by the witch of Endor was Saul reproved: thus Balaam also, the ancestor of these people of the East, became the Prophet even to Israel, and spoke of the Star that should arise out of Jacob. Thus were the Jews themselves instructed by ceremonial rites, which have been supposed to have been composed for them, and hallowed to higher meanings, out of Gentile superstitions. And perhaps more extensively still, for thus through their own philosophy did God teach the Greeks a higher wisdom, through Socrates and Plato and the Stagyrte, speaking "of temperance, and righteousness, and judgment to come." Thus to the Romans, through hardihood and discipline did He teach somewhat of the power of Christ crucified, and of long life given to filial piety. And peradventure in these Princes of the East, as in many Gentiles spoken of in the Gospels, some better thing was found, that they should be the first-fruits of the nations; the first from the East, as others afterwards from the West, and the North, and the South, shall sit down with the Patriarchs; as in the movement of the Israelitish camp Judah was towards the East and went first. When the gathering of the Church of Christ is spoken of, it is

first said, "I will bring thy seed from the East." So that it had passed into almost a proverbial prophecy. "O Jerusalem, look about thee towards the East, and behold the joy that cometh unto thee from God³." "From the rising of the sun shall My name be great among the Gentiles⁴." And with mysterious reference to things future in the Revelation also, "that the way of the kings of the East might be prepared." Every dispensation of God has its precursors and preparatory shadows, even as in nature all things are gradually developed: and the changes of the dawn and varied irradiations of light precede the rising of the sun. Thus, perhaps, this was first shown in "the righteous man" who came "from the East," and whose seed shall be "as the stars of Heaven." And the movement of this star is as the prelude to that time when the sun and moon and the twelve stars shall do obeisance to the true Joseph:—those mysterious stars that "in their courses fought against Sisera:"—the sun and moon that stood still, obedient to the call of Joshua:—as the sun of this world shall defer its going down, till the enemies of the true Joshua shall be overcome. But not as other stars is this star, for it is "His star," the star that shall arise out of Jacob. Its course is not that of other stars; it appears by day and not merely by night: it journeys with man from place to place; a star that moves and stands still at man's need, as knowing the thoughts of those it leads; which appears and disappears from view, not according to the laws of nature, but as if instinct with a soul beyond nature: as the Pillar of fire in the wilderness, that advanced or was stationary, and changed its appearance: a star with a light more Divine than that of the sun, as able to overcome his beams and to shine

³ Baruch iv. 36.

⁴ Mal. i. 11.

before him. It comes not as the star seen on mountains afar off, still mocking and eluding the sight, and ever equally distant to the wanderer, as all earthly good ; but it comes near and stands by, and marks one little town out of the thousands of Judah, and one little shed. Such is the Star of Bethlehem, mysterious Star, and mysterious stranger Kings and Priests, as they are supposed to have been ! they too appear and disappear as Melchizedek, the King and Priest of old ; and no one knows who or whence they are, but that they wait as shadowy guests on the true Melchizedek.

But "Salvation is of the Jews ;" and the tidings must go forth from the holy City ; they of Jerusalem shall publish it, though they believe it not ; they shall declare it ; the Gentile writes up from their own mouth His Title, "This the King of Jews." Though Israel reject, yet Prophets and Apostles are of the Jews ; "the Law shall go out of Sion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." He is first in order preached to the Jews ; for the Magians are in darkness till the Jews point out the way to Bethlehem, though they leave the Gentiles to go first. The Gentiles come, but in order to be taught of Israel : the Gentiles are led by faith, but are as blind men at the door itself, and Jerusalem must teach them from her oracles. As Moses of old led to the borders of the promised Canaan, but entered not in : so the Law now leads the way, and "opens the door of faith to the Gentiles," but enters not in : Jesus and they that are with Him pass over. Israel is warned, but without faith. The Gentile knocks at the door by faith, but without knowledge. The Jew clothes the Gentile with his own Scriptures, in order that the Gentile may go in before him : Jacob must put on the

raiment of his elder brother, in order that he may obtain the blessing: the Prodigal son must have the best raiment brought out from his father's house, in order that he may suitably appear before him. But even in Israel is there a remnant according to grace; her little ones believe: "Israelitish Shepherds," says St. Augustin, "Gentile Magians, one from far, the other from near, hastened to the one Corner-stone." The poor and ignorant of Israel: the learned and great among the nations. But now both Jews and Gentiles must mutually instruct each other; the Gentile by the star informs the Jew; the Jew teaches the Gentile by prophecy. Even the wicked shall serve Him and do His will: for as Pontius Pilate was made the instrument to declare the King of the Jews; so likewise now Herod is the means to bring forth the declaration of the Chief Priests and Scribes, expounding the Prophets; and to introduce the Gentiles pointing the way to Bethlehem.

"And when Herod the king heard it, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him." The unfathomable depths of the Divine counsels were moved; the fountains of the great deep were broken up: "the healing of the nations" was issuing forth. But nothing was seen on the surface of human society but this slight rippling of the water: the course of human things went on as usual, while each was taken up with little projects of his own. The tyrannical usurper from Idumea, unmoved by the miraculous interposition, thinks only of his own power as endangered thereby: and as Edom of old rejoiced over the destruction of Jerusalem, so is he of Edom now troubled at its good. And Jerusalem also partakes of his dismay, thinking nothing worthy of God and of His dispensation; but as of old, they are turn-

ing back to Egypt their oppressor, and thinking "scorn of that pleasant land:" as afterwards they were troubled in unbelief at the presence of their Deliverer, lest the "Romans should come and take away their place and nation;" or lest in any way they should be interfered with by the mysterious counsels and interpositions of God. Thus the wicked are ever by a mysterious fear "troubled" at His presence: they are "like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest." *"And collecting together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where Christ is to be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea. For so is it written by the Prophet, And thou Bethlehem, land of Juda."* Not that these are the words of the Prophet, for he says, "Bethlehem Ephratah," but they served to designate the place in a manner more generally known, thereby explaining it to the king, as different from the other Bethlehem in Zabulon; and this designation introduced other prophecies, as that of Jacob, that He should be of Judah. "For so is it written of the Prophet, And thou Bethlehem, land of Juda, *by no means the least art thou among the princes, or ruling cities, of Juda."* Or as it is in the Prophet Micah, "though thou be but little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be Ruler in Israel; Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." *"Out of thee shall come forth a Governor,"* He of whom Isaiah spoke, that "the Government shall be upon His shoulder," and "of the increase of His Government there shall be no end;"—"Who shall rule My people Israel." It is not said, we may observe, that He shall dwell at Bethlehem, or be an inhabitant of that place, but that

He shall "come forth" from thence: from Bethlehem shall He come forth as the Child of Mary; but as the Son of God, His "goings have been from everlasting." For "to us a Child is born"—in Bethlehem; "to us a Son is given"—from Heaven. It is the High and Lofty One Who inhabiteth eternity, yet maketh His dwelling with the lowly. As Nazareth was despised, so Bethlchem is little, little among a thousand. It is known for its very lowliness, for it is "little;" this is the day of humility; "the day of small things;" lowly and humbled to the dust is the state of oppressed Judah; little among the thousand captive estates of Rome: little in her own state, for she has an Edomite on her throne; little in Judah is the City of Bethlehem: little at Bethlehem is the manger, and the Babe; and low the estate of the Handmaid of the Lord: the very year itself is at its lowest verge of decline. But though little among a thousand, it is itself greater than all; for "a little one shall become a thousand⁵." It is Bethlehem "Ephratah," i. e. Bethlehem the fruitful, or fertility itself. It is the very "Church of the First-born," of which it is said, We found it at Ephratah⁶. It is Bethlehem, the House of Bread, the House of that true living Bread which came down from Heaven: and it is Bethlehem "the fruitful," because it is that Bread which is multiplied; which giveth life unto the world; yea, and peopleth Heaven with stars. The very place by its lowliness is significative of those mean Elements in which Christ, "the true Bread," is found.

But these Jews pointed out the House, yet entered not in: like those who built the ark of Noah, as St.

⁵ Isa. lx. 22.

⁶ Ps. cxxxii. 6.

Augustin observes, yet entered it not, providing a refuge for others, while they themselves perished in the flood. Yet still "the priests' lips keep knowledge," although it is not in their hearts: the living oracles of God were committed unto them, the Urim and Thummim had not departed: in the gathering together of the Chief Priests and Scribes there was truth. As usual they rightly knew and interpreted, but they knew not the mysteries of God, on account of their carnal lives; they are right in the interpretation of the literal Scripture, but fail of its higher expressions of mystery: and thus the Divine part of the prophecy they forget. For the Prophet proceeds to speak of the eternal Sonship and generation of Christ, "Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

In the fierce cruelty of Herod the Great we find something of the same wiliness which afterwards marked the character of his son Antipas. He brings not the light of the Divine Star into the assembly of Israel; but as he had now obtained one object, he secretly endeavours to come to the knowledge of the other. And herein he displayed that wonderful infatuation in iniquity, which afterwards appeared in the conduct of his son: for he acknowledges the dispensation to be Divine and true, while he deals with it as if it were a matter in which he could overreach and overthrow those very Divine counsels by which he gained his knowledge. If the Star and the Prophecies were not of God, and true, he had no reason for alarm: if they were of God, and true, how could he overthrow them? Such always is "the mystery of iniquity." From the Divine prophecies alone, and not from facts of human occurrence, he learns the place: from the supernatural star the age and birth of the Child of Heaven; while he thinks by overreaching God to destroy Him. In like manner, Herod

Antipas wished to see a miracle done by Christ in order to mock Him, which miracle would have proved His Divine power, while he wished to mock Him as a powerless victim. Wonderful deceitfulness of sin! And most miserable family, even to the third generation, from father to son, and to son's son, to be imbued so deep beyond any other in blood; one steeped in the blood of Infant Martyrs, the other in that of the Baptist; and the third, who slew James the Apostle with the sword; all three conspicuous in the persecution of Christ! O most execrable of kingly families, to usurp authority, and then to obtain thereby this eminence in crime!

"Then Herod having secretly called the Magi, accurately inquired from them the time of the star appearing." For, of course, the star must have appeared for some time to have brought them so far. The term "accurately inquired" (*ἡκριβωσε*) applied to this point, but not to the former inquiry of the place of birth, does, it must be allowed, appear to indicate that he intended by such inquiry to ascertain the age of the Infant, as it is afterwards alluded to when he slays the infants. *"And he sent them unto Bethlehem, and said, Go ye and thoroughly search out concerning the Child. And when ye shall have found Him, bring back tidings unto me, that I also may come and worship Him."* Even here again do his very expressions indicate the adoration that would be due to One thus Divinely born, at the very time while he was contriving to deceive and destroy Him. Such is the belief of devils, who "believe and tremble," and yet, in trembling, act as if they believed not. *"So, when they heard the king, they departed. And, behold, the star which they had seen in the East"* again appeared, and *"went before them, until it came and stood over where the Child was;"* shedding as it were its flood of

Divine moonlight upon the Inn, and the walls of the hal-
lowed shed, and on the Holy Babe and Mother within.
“*And when they saw the Star*” thus restored to them, and
miraculously manifesting itself for their guidance, “*they
rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.*” It is evident from
this account, that on their arrival at the Holy Land, the
Star had disappeared from them, and left them in much
concern and perplexity, in consequence of which they
appealed to the holy nation. Thus by miracles and signs
the Gentiles are brought (for signs are, as St. Paul says, for
unbelievers)⁷; they are thus brought to the sacred people,
among whom the oracles of God are; and then these
miracles that brought them cease, and are superseded by
the light of prophecy, the “light shining in a dark place,”
—not of itself the fulness of joy, but “to which ye do well
to take heed, until,” being itself superseded again, “the
day-star arise in the heart,” and the dawn appear from the
presence of the Sun of righteousness. He who consults
the Prophets and believes is led on by a star in the heart,
—for it is said, “I will give unto him the morning star⁸,”
—and by a promised voice behind him saying, “this is
the way,” till he comes to the fuller manifestation of Christ.
Thus the Cloud by day, and Pillar of fire by night,
led the Israelites to the Holy Land, and then ceased.
This is ever the way of God; He manifests Himself and
then retires, leaving man to search Him out; thus Christ
gleamed forth at His birth, and then withdrew His light,
till His Baptism. Thus also “He spake, and did hide
Himself from them⁹.” All this narrative is but a token
and type of what it has been with us Gentiles; we are
brought by miracles; we study the Scriptures; and it may

⁷ 1 Cor. xiv. 22.

⁸ Rev. ii. 28.

⁹ John xii. 36.

be, if found faithful, are assisted by Angelic visitations and warnings of God.

Great was their joy at having the object of their long search thus Divinely again designated ; nor is any disappointment or doubt expressed at the meanness of the abode in which they found the holy Mother and Divine Babe ; they looked in faith to something more than human greatness in Him Who had a Star to wait on Him in Heaven, and therefore rejoiced with exceeding joy. Balaam of old, when he had his eyes opened to behold the Star out of Jacob, and the Sceptre out of Israel, exclaimed, "I shall see Him, but not now ; I shall behold Him, but not nigh." But they may say with the Church, "The King hath brought me to His chambers." "I have found Him Whom my soul loveth¹." "Nigh," even at the doors : and "now," at this present time, shall I see and behold Him. St. Matthew, having said nothing of the manger in which our Lord was born, does not here introduce the mention of it ; or they might have now removed from the shed or cave in which they were found by the shepherds. "*And when they had come to the house, they found the Child with Mary His Mother, and they fell down and worshipped Him.*" No speech is recorded of these mysterious visitants, they inquire but speak not. They are of uncircumcised lips, not hallowed by the coal from God's altar ; but Judah speaks,—“He is born at Bethlehem,” the Shepherds speak, Elisabeth and Mary, Anna and Simeon speak—there are prophetic hymns from their mouths, but the Gentiles worship in silence. Yet the act of their worship itself speaks with sufficient eloquence. “Merchandise of Ethiopia and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto Thee ;—they shall fall down unto Thee, they

¹ Cant. i. 4 ; iii. 4.

shall make supplication unto Thee, saying, Surely God is in Thee, and there is none else, there is no God. Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour²." Or again, "The Gentiles shall come unto Thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies³." "There is none like unto Thee, O Lord. Who would not fear Thee, O King of nations? For to Thee doth it appertain; forasmuch, as among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like unto Thee. The Lord is the true God; He is the living God, and an everlasting King⁴." Their fathers have been worshippers of the Heavenly Bodies, yet led by a purer faith, they think not of worshipping this star: the men of the East make not Gods of men, yet these are taught of God to worship the new-born King; in anticipation of that time, when "all kings shall fall down before Him, all nations shall do Him service." When the four-and-twenty "fall down before Him that sat on the throne, . . . and cast their crowns before the throne⁵." And these offerings of the Gentiles seem to express their willingness to build Him a Temple, if He will take up His abode among them.

"And having opened their treasures, they offered unto Him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh." "The kings of Arabia and Saba shall bring gifts;" "the daughter of Tyre," she whose merchants are princes and the honourable of the earth, the types of this world's wealth, "shall be there with a gift." Not the East only, though it be the first, but the West also; not Arabia only, and the children of the East, but "the kings of Tharsis and of the isles shall bring presents." And the gifts themselves are specified; "they shall bring gold

² Isa. xlv. 14, 15. ³ Jer. xvi. 19. ⁴ Jer. x. 7. 10. ⁵ Rev. iv. 10.

and incense⁶." And these very gifts being symbolical as unto God, prove, as St. Chrysostom observes, "that they worshipped Him as God, not as man; coming like those in Scripture who come to the house of the Lord "with offerings and incense in their hand⁷." "Many nations shall come from far to the name of the Lord God, with gifts in their hands, even gifts to the King of Heaven⁸." And indeed, what were those gifts to a Child, unless that Child was God? for there were no kingly Parents to be won by such gifts; but One in Heaven. All ancient writers indeed suppose these offerings to be replete with Divine significancy, St. Irenæus, and St. Chrysostom, and Augustin, and Hilary, and Gregory. The gold ever implies kingship and royalty;—"Thou shalt set a crown of pure gold on His head;" and "upon Thy right hand did stand the Queen in a vesture of gold;"—the King's daughter hath her "clothing of wrought gold." And the frankincense is ever the offering made to God throughout the Law; and even in the Revelation, "the smoke of the incense ascended up before God." And myrrh indicates humanity, and therefore mortification, "wine mingled with myrrh," did they give Him to drink at death: and with myrrh did they wrap up His Body when dead. In the Psalms, "Thy garments smell of myrrh:" and in the Canticles, He is "perfumed with myrrh and frankincense⁹." St. Hilary carries on the same thought still further. "The oblation of their gifts," he says, "expressed an understanding of His entire nature; by gold confessing the King, by frankincense God, by myrrh the Man." To which he adds, "and thus, through the means of their worship, was there in

⁶ Isa. lx. 6.

⁸ Tobit xiii. 11.

⁷ Jer. xli. 5.

⁹ Cant. iii. 6.

each of these the indication of a great Sacrament, in Man of death; in God of Resurrection; in the King of Judgment¹. The subject is incorporated into the Roman Services, in a Hymn which has been thus happily translated:

"Magians see the Star, and bring	their choice Eastern offering,
And with suppliant knee unfold	myrrh, and frankincense, and
	gold;—
Gold, a Monarch to declare,	frankincense that God is there,
Myrrh, to tell the heavier tale	of His tomb and funeral."

Surely faith alone could have led them here, there was no external sign of Royalty to indicate the Child, but the Heavenly star seen by faith: and there had been nothing to mark out the sacred nation from afar to Eastern kings, but the presence of God discerned by faith: and when they were now in Jerusalem there was nothing to guide, but faith in God's prophecies. Like Abraham of old they had left kindred and home and country for Christ's sake, in type of the true children of faith; seeking One in the midst of danger, from Whom they could gain no worldly interest, Whom once to have seen is all they need: all their labours are to do Him service, offering the best gifts that earth can supply, and then to depart in peace. By the costliness of their gifts they seem to say, like the man after God's own heart, "I will not offer unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing²." And thus, as Zaccheus was a true "son of Abraham," and Nathanael was "an Israelite indeed," so may these be said to have partaken of the Kingly anointing and Princely heart of David, and to have been true princes after his Royal line.

Such is the picture now presented before us, the three

¹ Com. in Matt. cap. 1.

² 2 Sam. xxiv. 24.

kneeling Strangers, their costly gifts, and the Divine Child. He is an Infant, but their God and King. All infancy is hallowed by a sight so wonderful: the hallowed memory of this infancy is on all Baptized infants; they only are pure and spotless, unsoiled and clean as the Heavens, when fresh in Christ's Blood. How does this Infancy in itself speak all the mysteries of the Kingdom? Not only does He receive worship, but seems as from a teacher's seat to preach unto them; if less fearfully, yet not less lovingly than afterwards from His cross; and to His cradle and His cross also will He point from His seat of judgment. From this manger He seems to say, "suffer the little children to come unto Me, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven." Truly the first-fruits of His kingdom must these be who could worship a Child in swaddling clothes—innocent Babe, helpless Child, in appearance, yet at the same time "The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of peace!"

But the Divine mission and guidance of these mysterious visitants is performed, as that of Melchisedec was when he offered the Bread and Wine, and spoke nothing, but disappeared again. The Evil one would render them his unconscious instruments, while they, being guileless themselves, suspect no evil; but God protects the simple in their simplicity. Guileless souls have, as "Israelites indeed," the vision of God: blessed for their obedience, not with the warning of an Angel, but with that of God Himself; which of itself intimates in what favour these Gentile strangers were with God. *"And being warned in a dream not to turn back to Herod, by another way they returned into their own country."*

³ Isa. ix. 6.

All things speak to us, and every movement around the cradle is replete with instruction and doctrine: their being forbidden to return the same way to Herod and Judea teaches us, as St. Hilary says, "that we are not permitted to seek knowledge from Judea, but are admonished to place all salvation and hope in Christ, and to abstain from the course of our former life⁴." Advice indeed which was given to the disobedient Prophet in vain⁵, but not to these. They return not to Judea, they return not to the righteousness which is by the Law, and thereby fall from grace: they return not to Herod, the very type and principle of evil, and of the prince of this world, but they return by another and Heaven-directed way unto their own country, the East, the region of Paradise.

SECTION XII

THE PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE

"And when the days of her purification,"—for this seems, no doubt, the right reading, and not "His," as some Greek manuscripts have it, nor "their purification," as Origen, Theophylact, and others read;—"when the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were fulfilled, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord" (Luke). "In sin hath my mother conceived me," says David, speaking of his uncleanness in the sight of God; but not so He that was born without sin of an immaculate Virgin, not conceived in sin, but in the sanctification of the Ever-blessed Spirit. Yet

⁴ Hom. in Matt. cap. i. 5.

⁵ 1 Kings xiii. 17.

as Christ submitted to Baptism, though He needed not washing; and to Circumcision, though He needed not mortification; much more does His Mother fulfil that Purification, though she needed no cleansing from that Birth: and Christ Himself to the Presentation in the Temple, though ever present in Heaven. And in so doing were they fulfilling and setting forth mysteries. The forty days which mark the usual period of purgation and trial and absence from the light of God's countenance are completed. Ten is the multiplier of indefinite number, and four the Divine dispensation regulating the same. As for forty days the floods descended, and on the fortieth day, "in the self-same day," Noah entered into the ark: so for forty days Christ continued upon the earth after His Resurrection, and on the fortieth day, "in the self-same day," Christ entered into Heaven, and the ark of His Church was let loose upon the waters of Baptism, to find rest in that new Heaven and new earth. So now on the fortieth day is Christ presented in His Temple. Forty days has He been absent from His Father's house, as Moses was forty years in the house of Pharaoh, and forty years in exile. And it may be that this prefigures another and final fulfilment in this, that after its forty days of human trial shall be the purification of His Church from all her uncleanness, and presentation of His elect before God. But it is after the Circumcision, for mortification and circumcision of the heart and spirit must precede our appearing before God. And even now is it being spiritually fulfilled in this, that the Church of the Gentiles, purified from her uncleanness, presents Christ in the temple of the human soul.

"As it is written in the Law of the Lord, Every

male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord." This is the First-born that is due unto the Lord, "the First-born of every creature." For He hath taken the Levites in place of the first-born of Israel, whom the Lord hallowed unto Himself, "on the day that He smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt:" and for the firstling of unclean animals He took the Lamb, the clean animal. But when the Levitical Priesthood shall cease, and the Lord takes again His own, the First-born, then shall He no longer claim unto Himself the pair of turtle doves, nor the lamb from the Jewish nation. He shall restore them to us: but He restoreth not out of His treasures according to the same measure as man giveth, but according to the exceeding abundance of His repayment; the dove that He shall restore is His own hallowing Spirit that descended like a dove, when His own Son, "the First-born" and "Well-beloved," was accepted by Him as His true Priest, in place of the order of Levi—was accepted first of all at His Baptism, and afterwards at His Ascension into Heaven. Then shall He give back the dove out of His abundance; and where the Church is rich in His gifts, even the costlier offering of the Lamb, bestowed upon us at the Holy Eucharist, who have with us the Church, the mother of the First-born, rich in blessings and Heavenly treasures. But now they must offer the typical offering of the Law, for it is the "day of small things," which faith despises not: "*And to present an offering, according to that which is said in the Law of the Lord, A pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons.*" For although the Law first mentioned the lamb, together with a young pigeon or turtle dove, yet in case of poverty, it specified this. And here the poverty of the needy, like the

poor widow in the Temple, hath given more than all the rich, and such as shall abound unto the riches of her liberality; for the poor Virgin Mother hath presented the true Lamb of God; and out of the superabundance of her deep poverty, the two turtle doves also. But the number two ever waiteth for a third, and here the two signifies the coming of a Third, the Spirit who shall descend in likeness of a dove, Who is already mystically present to hallow the offering of the true Lamb.

Nor shall the Law fail, for the "remnant, according to the election of grace⁶," fulfil its behests, and enter into its spiritual promises. And now, when there takes place that great fulfilment of the Law, which was known unto God only, out of those who were righteous according to the Law He calls chosen witnesses of the same. A Virgin Mother submits to the purification of the Law, though she alone hath needed it not; for she alone hath conceived without sin, and, if the tradition be true, hath borne without those birth-pangs which are the penalty of the daughters of Eve: and He, Who by being circumcised, hath undertaken to fulfil the Law, does now, for the first time, fulfil it. The Holy Spirit, on such an occasion, leads His own true worshippers as solemn witnesses of the scene. "*And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and this man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel.*" By obedience to all the statutes and ordinances of the Law, looking forward to the true fulfilment of its promises, as it is written, "to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God:" and of those that serve the Lord, and love His Name, "I will make them joyful in My house of prayer⁷." "*And*

⁶ Rom. xi. 5.

⁷ Isa. lvi. 7.

the Holy Ghost was upon him." We are indeed afterwards told that the Holy Spirit was not yet given*, that is, in His fulness, in the true fulfilment of the water flowing from the smitten Rock, as it was kept in memory in the great day of the feast of Tabernacles; but the true Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world still enlightened all, according to the measure of each. "*And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.*" To see and be able to discern, not, perhaps, Christ the Lord, for this was reserved for the fulness of faith, to see Christ as God; but to see Him as the Lord's Christ, as the Anointed of God, the true Priest, Prophet, and King, "anointed with the oil of gladness" above His fellows, with the unction of the Holy Ghost, not by measure given unto Him: Him whose very "Name is as ointment poured forth¹." Anointed, not for His own sake, but for that of others;—"He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel unto the poor;" that others may partake of His anointing, "the oil of gladness," and "enter into the joy of their Lord." But never was Prophet so designated as being under the influence of the Holy Spirit, as by this description;—that upon his life was "the Holy Spirit" shed; that this promise was revealed to him "by the Spirit:" and that this his coming into the Temple was "by the Spirit." "*And he came by the Spirit into the temple.*" As "no one can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost," none but He could prepare this saint to discern Him. And he came by His guidance, for "they who are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." And yet, perhaps, no sight more ordinary to

* John vii. 40.

¹ Cant. i. 3.

human eyes; an aged man coming as usual to the Temple, and poor parents bringing an infant according to the custom of the Law; such a scene would not have attracted even a transient look of regard from the Pharisees that passed by; unless peradventure one standing in the Temple to pray might contrast his own greatness with their meanness, as with that of the Publican in the parable. But that Pharisee could not know the consolation of them that mourn, which was with the Publican, and unknown to him was the deep and heartfelt joy of those little ones with whom the Holy Spirit delights to dwell. It is not mentioned what the immediate circumstances were, which, humanly speaking, led this aged Saint to this recognition, or whether there may have been any beside the instinctive teaching of God. Whether he had known the Royally-descended pair, or had heard any of the circumstances of this Birth, or of Elisabeth, and the Baptist, or of the Shepherds, or of the Magi, such lesser matters are all lost in the greater, that the Holy Spirit was with him. Thus was there no place without a witness, the Star among the Gentiles, prophecy among the Scribes, the Angels' song in the country; in the King's court there are the Wise men ad-ducing the Star, and the Priests the prophecy; among the humble worshippers in the Temple, are Simeon and Anna.

"And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, that they might do for Him according to the custom of the Law, he himself took Him up in his arms." As this holy man in type, so did the Righteousness of the Law, which appeared now growing old and ready to fail, receive Christ into its arms. We read hereafter of others, that Christ took them up into His arms when

children (as of Ignatius Christophorus); but of this Saint alone that he took up Christ into his arms ;—took as an Infant into his arms Him Whom the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain ;—and broke forth into singing and prophecy. The “babes” sang in the Temple when our Lord entered as Priest and King ; showing hereby the nature of His Kingdom : and he who now praises God has the Holy Child in his arms—all is of holy childhood. And now is the Psalm fulfilled—“let Thy priests be clothed with righteousness,” for this was the priest after the order of Melchisedec, the “King of righteousness ;”—“and let Thy saints sing with joyfulness.” *“He blessed God, and said, Now dost Thou dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word, in peace.”* According to that word of promise by the Holy Spirit, to which in faith he had clung through great difficulties and trials ; but he that liveth by faith shall come to sight also ; and at length be filled with the pleasures of God’s house. “Let Thy servant depart in peace,” after all perplexing thoughts, in peace to welcome death ; in peace for the sake of Israel ; in peace of God, which passeth all understanding :—that peace which our Lord at His departing declared to His servants, and now gives to the just man at his own departure : “not as the world giveth, give I unto you :” that “peace on earth” which the Angels had already declared. The Israel after the Law is about to depart, because he hath found the true Joseph. “And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face.” *For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation*,—not the Saviour only, but Him Who is Himself Salvation and Life,—“*which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people ; a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel.*” Nor has

this Evangelical Prophet, speaking by the Holy Ghost, and with Christ in his arms, any low and carnal notion of the Messiah ; but in the illumination of faith he goes beyond Apostles, and sees what the first of Apostles, even after the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit, was slow to believe :—the mystery of the calling of the Gentiles. As the Prophet had said, “I will also give Thee for a light to the Gentiles, that Thou mayest be My salvation unto the end of the earth.” For before this, he had been in the Spirit waiting for the consolation of Israel, but now, as if filled with the radiance of that Child Whom he bears in his arms, he sees already the light of the Gentiles in that Child. He sees with blessed eyes that which Prophets and kings have desired to see, and have not seen,—“the desire of all nations ;” and holding in his arms Him Who comes to set loose the captive, his chains drop off, he is already released and set free ; released from the law of sin and of death ; for to see Christ before death, is to die in peace. More blessed than his bodily eyes were those eyes of his soul, whereby in seeing that Holy Infant, he could see salvation. “Write, From henceforth blessed are they that die in the Lord ! even so saith the Spirit.”

“The promise that he should see Christ implied,” says Origen, “some advantage in that sight ; and a secret gift of God was contained therein, which blessed Simeon received. A woman touched the hem of His garment and was healed : and what, therefore, must we think of Simeon, who received Him as an Infant into his arms, and rejoiced, seeing the Little One he carried was He Who had come to let loose the captive : knowing that no one could release him from the prison of the

body with the hope of a future life, but He Whom he held in his arms³." "Let him who wishes to depart," says St. Ambrose⁴, "come into the Temple, let him come to Jerusalem: let him wait for the Lord's Christ; let him take in his hands the Word of God, embracing Him by the arms of faith."

Nothing is so incomprehensible and wonderful to our contemplation, as the state of mind of Joseph and the holy Mother: we endeavour in vain to realize the condition of persons so situated, to whom such a Revelation had been made; but it appears throughout, that their minds did not rise to the fulness of that exalted privilege, to comprehend the Godhead in that mysterious Infant. Things communicated to them as to the Israelites of old, and to disciples afterwards, concerning our Lord's Divinity, seem to have left them still to search out by degrees, and to come to the comprehension of that mysterious greatness with which they were conversant—the rays of Godhead and of glory that broke forth filled them with wonder and adoration; while knowing they knew not what they knew; and in believing, still by observation and comparison and reflection, ever ascending to the heights of that Divine knowledge, which still was not far from them, in their mouth, and in their heart. Thus we also, though we know the great things of the Gospel long before, are persuaded of them, and have embraced them, yet on every fulfilment before our eyes and with us, in the development of those promises, we marvel and wonder as at some new thing; gaining new eyes to see that which we had before seen and confessed, and yet knew not. As the blessed Apostles confessed Christ as God, yet still so needed

³ Hom. in Luc. xv.

⁴ Expos. in Luc. lib. ii. 59.

to know Him more, as if all they had known was but ignorance of Him: that even His Resurrection itself “appeared to them as idle tales” after all, although it had been so frequently before (at least six times) declared to them. And thus we read, “*And Joseph and His mother wondered at those things which were spoken concerning Him.*” Yet how could they have thus marvelled, if they could have fully comprehended the mystery declared to them, and of which they were made the believing and wondering and adoring instruments,—of Immanuel or God with us, or of Jesus the Saviour?

But saddening and sobering thoughts are mixed with exalting tidings in Scripture. “*And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary, His Mother, Behold This One is set for the falling and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign that shall be spoken against . . . so that the thoughts of many hearts shall be revealed.*” This Evangelical Prophet is therefore not ignorant of that Cross which even disciples could not comprehend; and of that mystery of Christ Crucified which is to try the hearts of all. For this manifestation of Christ Crucified pervades mysteriously all His life; and this dispensation shall be the trial of men’s spirits in the wonderful wisdom of God, Whose thoughts are not as our thoughts. Nor shall even those that are nearest in approach, and highest in privilege and knowledge revealed to them, escape the searching and fiery trial of this mysterious probation. “*And even thine own soul also a sword shall pierce.*” For this is He of Whom it is written, and even now in part fulfilled, that “He shall suddenly come to His Temple, and shall sit”—or continue there, “as a refiner and purifier of silver.” “But who may abide the day of His

coming?" For even His blessed Mother herself shall scarce in faith rise above that trial: as even now, in this His coming to the Temple beyond the thought of man, who is there that understands, or can abide the test? Where is all Jerusalem that has waited for Him? Where the Scribes and Pharisees that might know the Babe of Bethlehem, as they so lately declared Him to be?

As it was said of Joseph, that "the iron entered into his soul;" so the iron that pierced Christ's tender Body entered into her tender soul; of His enemies it is written, "swords are in their lips," so their cruel words to Him pierced her: and thus all His Passion was as a sword in her soul. Whether this implies doubt in her faith seems uncertain. St. Chrysostom, Augustin, Basil, Origen, and others, think it does. And the context seems to imply it. Therefore, over and above this first application to her sorrows, it may be, as St. Ambrose understands it, that "the Word of God, sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart," should open and disclose in her also the mystery of this trial of faith, and the unsearchable Eye of God in her soul. And St. Augustin, that she "looked with doubt and astonishment at the death of her Lord, seeing the Son of God so humbled, as to come down even to death. And as a sword passing close by a man causes fear, though it does not strike him; so doubt also causes sorrow, though it does not kill."

He shall be "for a sign that shall be spoken against," not in Himself only, but also in His members to the last; wherever He is manifested in His followers, there is He spoken against by the world, even as a sign to which is pointed the finger of contumely: in like

manner as all that He did in the flesh was spoken against. Where the preaching of Him in every place is not a savour of life, it is a savour unto death; a stone of stumbling and rock of offence to the houses of Israel, while a light to the Gentiles. And the object of all this mysterious dispensation is, "that the hearts of many may be revealed" before the Eye of their Judge in every place. As St. Ambrose says on this passage, "Behold, Simeon prophesies that the Lord hath come for the ruin and resurrection of many; that He may discern the merits of the just and the unjust, and according to the quality of our actions, may, as a just and true Judge, determine either punishments or rewards."

But all circumstances, however apparently accidental, are overruled by a Divine control; and another also must be joined to this sacred band, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. *"And there was Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser. She was advanced in length of days, having lived with an husband seven years from her virginity. And she was a widow of about eighty-four years, who departed not from the Temple, with fastings and with prayers serving God night and day."* The very pattern indeed of her who is "a widow indeed," not only under the Law, but as St. Paul describes, under the Gospel, who "continueth in supplications and prayers night and day⁵." And under the Law, the very type of what the Law required of those who should obtain the promises of God, to whom He will show His covenant, "unto which our twelve Tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come⁶;" in type and earthly semblance of those "who serve God day

⁵ 1 Tim. v. 5.

⁶ Acts xxvi, 7.

and night in His Temple'." A widow, a prophetess, one that worshipped night and day;—like the Jewish Church herself that had lost her husband the Law, as St. Paul says, her seven years being accomplished, when on the eighth day Christ arose. Of the tribe of Asher, of whom Moses said, "let Asher be blessed with children," "and as thy days so shall thy strength be;" for "the barren" shall have "more children than she that hath an husband," while "she that hath borne seven, languisheth:" she that is feeble with age, shall be renewed as the eagle, and feel beneath her the Everlasting arms. "*And she at that very instant having come in together*" with Simeon "*made confession unto the Lord;*"—she joined also with him in her own holy Hymn of thanksgiving, for she was herself a Prophetess. And thus, as at our Lord's Crucifixion, though He was overwhelmed by multitudes, and every portion of the nation took part in His death, yet in each there was a remnant according to grace, so now also, there was one to prophesy of each class. As St. Ambrose observes, "Simeon prophesied, a Virgin hath prophesied, the married woman hath prophesied, a widow also must prophesy; that no profession and no sex may be wanting."

For this purpose is she introduced, for nothing more is said of her. "*And she spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.*" Such are the holy Israelites of those days, waiting for the consolation of Israel; waiting for God is the very character of their worship. To such the holy widow spake, not to all; "to witnesses chosen of God, not to all the people," as our Lord manifested Himself at His Resurrection, being

seen of them for forty days. And such He declared to be the law of all His spiritual manifestations, that if any will keep the commandments of God and do His will, He will manifest Himself unto them, and not unto the world. And here, as at all times in His house of Prayer, few are the worshippers of God, when worship is the object of their coming. So homely and ordinary was this scene in human eyes, but how different did it appear to the invisible creations of God! "Orders of incorporeal spirits," says St. Gregory of Nyssa, "bowing the neck, were invisibly preparing a pomp suitable to God; were adoring the ocean of wisdom unspeakable: and waiting for the fulfilment of the appointment of the letter of the Law, in the manifestation of the mystery which was hidden in God, the Maker of All."

The words of St. Luke, after the account of what took place at the Purification, seem to indicate an intention of returning to Nazareth after that event; and the custom of the Jews of going up to Jerusalem for religious services, and again returning to distant parts of the country, occurs so frequently and so incidentally throughout the Gospels, that it is natural to suppose it may have been their intention to do so. For alluding to that ceremony he proceeds: "*And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.*" But St. Augustin supposes, that this occasion, and the sensation produced at Jerusalem, as mentioned at the Purification, with the circumstance of its being thus noised abroad again, aroused the attention of Herod; who now finds that the Magi had departed without returning to him. Here, therefore, at this period we must fix the slaughter of the Infants and the flight into

Egypt, at a time when they were returning or intending to return to Galilee, or indeed, possibly after they had returned. For St. Chrysostom seems to think, that they returned to Nazareth before they went to Egypt. "He would not," he says, "have brought them down thither before the Purification, in order that nothing should be done contrary to the law, but he waited for her to be purified, and to go to Nazareth, and that then they should go down to Egypt⁸." But it is of course very possible that St. Luke may merely introduce the mention of the return to Nazareth, in order to connect it with the incident he is about to introduce in our Lord's subsequent childhood. For he does thus proceed in the narrative, without allusion to times and circumstances intervening, in many cases. An instance precisely similar to this occurs, when he speaks of our Lord's coming to Galilee after the Temptation. "When the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from Him for a season; and Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee." Here it might seem as if he was mentioning things immediately continuous in point of time, although it appears from St. John's account, that nearly the space of a year must have intervened. Another instance of this may be found in the last chapter of his Gospel, where the narrative of the Resurrection is in such a way combined with that of the Ascension, as to induce one at first sight to think it to be all a continued series of narration. St. Augustin does not at all suppose that they went to Nazareth before going to Egypt. It may indeed be allowed that it is exceedingly like the order of things in St. Matthew, to proceed by association of circumstances; and therefore

⁸ Hom. in Matt. ix. 4. 6.

speaking of Herod and the Wise men, to proceed to the slaughter of the Infants, although many days, or weeks, or months may have intervened between that and the return of the Magi: yet certainly the words of St. Luke, under any interpretation, seem inconsistent with the supposition, that after the Purification they should continue for two years at Bethlehem, and that with the intention of continuing there. We must therefore here resume the narrative of St. Matthew.

SECTION XIII

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

It is in a dream that God again regulates and guides their motions. The dreams of the good are visited by holy aspirations and thoughts of safety, and thus as well as waking thoughts affect their secret destinies; so likewise under the veil of slumber Angels appear to them, and thus regulate their waking conduct; and the two worlds of visible and invisible agents co-operate together, as well in the regions of slumber as in the outer world: both alike wait on the Son of Man, and minister to those who are found in Him, and are heirs of His salvation. "*And when they had departed,*" i. e. when the Magi had returned to their own country, "*behold, an Angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph, saying, Arise, and take the young Child, and His Mother, and flee into Egypt; and be thou there until I shall tell thee; for Herod is about to seek the young Child to destroy Him.*" How mysterious and unsearchable are the ways of God: Egypt that once

destroyed the male children of Israel, now saves the true First-born of Israel. And as the Lord said to Pharaoh, "Israel is My son, even My first-born," "if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy first-born;" so the destroying Angel slew the first-born of Egypt, and saved the first-born of Israel; the king of Judea, in return, now slays the infants of Israel, and Egypt shelters the Holy Infant from his cruelty. Herein too was a great mystery, that Christ begins by returning good for evil; blessings to Egypt which had persecuted His Israel. The Lord "Who keepeth not His anger for ever," says an ancient writer, "remembered the woes He had brought upon Egypt, and sent His Son that He might heal the ten plagues of Egypt, and that the nation which had been the persecutor might be the guardian of His First-born." "Since Babylon and Egypt," says St. Chrysostom, "were most in all the earth burnt up with the flames of ungodliness, He sent the Wise men to the one; He Himself, with His Mother, visited the other; signifying from the first that He means to correct and amend them both, and hereby leading the whole world to expect His bounties⁹."

And how are all things now reversed! they who had light in Goshen are left in darkness: and Egyptian darkness has the true Light. "Moses before," says St. Augustin, "had shut up the light of day from the Egyptians; Christ by going down thither, brought back light to them that sat in darkness." Judea persecutes; Egypt, the very type of idolatry, "worshipping," says Hilary, "monsters of all kinds for gods," the very scorn and ridicule of the Heathen¹, protects; Babylon, the very figure of Antichrist, worships; as in the end, the

⁹ Matt. Hom. viii. 3.

¹ Juv. Sat. xv.

first shall be last and the last first. Already does that mystery break forth of Israel after the flesh persecuting Israel after the spirit; and Israel, who was pursued of Pharaoh, becoming himself as Pharaoh and as Egypt, partakes of his persecutions and of his condemnation, being that Israel "which is spiritually called Egypt²." "The fury of Herod," says St. Hilary, "and his slaying the infants, is a type of the rage of the Jewish people against the Christians, under the notion, by the slaughter of the blessed Martyrs, of extinguishing the Name of Christ from the faith and profession of all men." To stifle as it were the infant Church by the blood of her little ones. And already does that mystery show forth itself, to be afterwards interwoven with all the history of the Messiah, that His "foes shall be of His own household;" that "a Prophet is not received in his own country." Already gleams the mystery of Christ Crucified; by the Law He is stamped as the victim by circumcision, whereby His blood as a prelibation is shed; the other mark also needful is the persecution of the world. And here is set forth another truth, that persecution is the outward mark of God's elect after the Spirit; as circumcision is the mark of His elect after the Law. But as yet He is a Child, and hath done nothing to call on Him the enmity of the world and the devil, unless it be the holiness of His supposed Parents, known already to the latter; and the Mighty Arm of the Lord, which hath already begun to be revealed. For the troubles and afflictions of the holy Mother arise from her thus nearly approaching Him, and partaking of His Cross. And how throughout is greatness and lowliness, the Son of God and the Son of Man, combined; the Son of God,

² Rev. xi. 8.

and the Child of Mary ; the poor Carpenter, and David the king ; the Star in the Heavens, and the flight into Egypt ; Eastern Chiefs, and poor Shepherds : the Shepherds in the field, and the Angels from on high ; the Presentation as of a poor infant ; the prophecies of Simeon as of God our salvation : the pair of turtle doves as from a poor mother ; the gold, frankincense, and myrrh, as to the King of kings !

“And he arose, and took the young Child and His Mother by night, and departed into Egypt.” The very words, thus following on those of the Angel’s command, indicate the readiness of his obedience, for the words of the fulfilment are the very words of the command ; as of Abraham it is said, “and they went forth into the land of Canaan : and into the land of Canaan they came.” And it was “by night,” making night the only witness of their way³, which intimates the suddenness and secrecy of their departure ; night is the very emblem and type of evil ; as Egypt is the place of evil and type of darkness ; and these receive Him Who is “the Light of the world,” in Whom there is “no darkness at all.”

But from Egypt, the refuge of Christ, we return to Bethlehem, the place of His birth. *“Then Herod, when he perceived that he had been mocked by the Magi,”*—had been deluded by them, and so overreached in his secret design, which self-reproach and disappointment interpret as mockery,—*“he was exceedingly enraged ; and sent forth, and slew all the children which were in Bethlehem, and in all the borders thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time he had accurately inquired of the Magi.”* Nature itself, or rather the fatherly tenderness of God, has endued all young creatures with interest and touching

³ νυκτὶ κοινώσαντες ὁδόν, Pind.

beauty in all their ways and appearances, in order to arrest and win for them fostering care and gentleness; they have no voice but that which is a cry for help; every thing human, therefore, must be destroyed in the heart, the milk of humanity utterly dried up, before men are steeled against infants. But this is a true descendant of that Edom which "in the day of Jerusalem, said, Down with it, even to the ground;" and rejoiced with that Babylon which threw their "children against the stones." He who fails of greatest good falls into greatest sin, as Judas did; to this favoured king, the first of all in that sacred nation, is the announcement made of the birth of Him for whom all Creation had longed and yearned since the fall; and yet the effect of this knowledge which Heaven had vouchsafed to him, is a crime at the atrocity of which even the heathen world stands aghast. There is a saying⁴ reported of the Emperor Augustus, which implies that the knowledge of it had come to him, and the cry of the infants had penetrated the imperial palace. He has become the chief representative of the evil one, "the dragon stood before the woman, for to devour her child as soon as it was born⁵." Already in the fall of Herod does the prophetic sign appear, of Him who is to be for the fall of many, and for the rising again of many; for of these martyred infants good is foretold,—"they shall come again from the land of the enemy." Already appears the sign of Him who is not to reign by an earthly life, as Herod apprehended, but to conquer by death; therefore, all things around Him speak

⁴ Mentioned by Macrobius, that Augustus, on being told that Herod had a son of his own killed among the infants of two years old, said it was better to be to him *ἔν ᾧ ὕδιν*.

⁵ Rev. xii. 4.

of death, and of those sufferings and sorrows which sit in the vestibule of death. Oh the unrelenting madness of superabounding cruelty ! not in Bethlehem only, but in all the coasts ; not just born infants only, but all under two years. Thus of that other Herod we read, that “ when he had sought for Peter, and found him not, having examined by torture the guard, he commanded that they should be put to death⁶.” But it may be asked, How is it that God permits the innocent to suffer thus ? To which it must be answered, that no one, indeed, as far as he is innocent, can suffer wrong, for suffering brings remission of sins or a great gain : “ If ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye ; and be not afraid of their terror.” And to them that suffer good is requited for evil⁷. But the inspired Evangelist himself will explain this dispensation of God, as no human words can do : “ *Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, A voice was heard in Rama, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning ; Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.*” The Evangelist here, as is often the case in the New Testament, rather refers to the passage than quotes the whole of it ; for the entire chapter, and the preceding one, speak with indescribable sweetness and beauty of the restoration of the true Israel of God out of all their troubles ; and the continuation of the words referred to are the best comment on their intention. “ Thus saith the Lord, Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears ; for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord ; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border⁸.”

⁶ Acts xii. 19.⁷ 2 Sam. xvi. 12.⁸ Jer. xxxi. 15—17.

Herein, therefore, was contained a vast and ineffable mystery, set forth long ago in figure ; and in that figure there was comfort given by the Holy Ghost through the Prophet ; yet throughout looking forward to and speaking of this event. For when Israel was carried away captive to Babylon, so great was the distress, that Rachel, by whose tomb they were taken, might be said to be mourning in her grave at the sad issue of such high promises to Jacob's seed. But the Lord in the Prophet bids her not to weep, for they shall again return from the land of the enemy. In their fall and captivity there is a wide difference between the chosen people of God and the nations. "I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee : though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee⁹." Nay, it is the tribe of Judah alone in which the power of renovation more especially resides, because in Judah is the promised Shiloh, Who is the Resurrection and the Life. And what does this signify (for it was not of private interpretation), but that for those who are truly the children of God there is hope in temporal death. That we are not to mourn for Christ's little ones who depart to the grave, "even as others who have no hope." For Rachel, in her grave, shall be comforted, and they shall return ; "them that sleep in Christ shall God bring with Him,"—"from the land of the enemy." "Awake and sing, ye that sleep in dust¹⁰." "I will be thy King." "I will ransom them from the power of the grave : I will redeem them from death : O death, I will be thy plagues ; O grave, I will be thy destruction." And where shall we find more sweet and pure representatives of Christ's flock, than in these little ones ? Where shall we find such praise as is given

⁹ Jer. xxx. 11.

¹⁰ Isa. xxvi. 19.

of those who thus died? "These are they which were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God and the Lamb¹." They are the very types and first-fruits of those who shall enter into the kingdom. "Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of Heaven." These blessed spirits throng, as it were, around the infant Child, the cradle of the Virgin-born: martyrs, if not in will, yet in deed; martyrs most meet to attend His Throne: they minister unto Him their King, not in life, but by dying; for by death He reigns, and in dying conquers; and by death opens His kingdom. His death, as by a sort of sacramental mystery, hallowes the deaths of infants; and not their deaths only, but all those various sufferings in infancy, which introduce them into life with the savours of death. The Eastern Sages set forth in type the call of the Gentiles, as Simeon and Anna of just men according to the Law; so were these types of the "little ones" of His kingdom—those to whom God hath revealed things hidden from the wise and prudent. They alone have not partaken in the wicked deeds of that Israel which is Sodom and Egypt. These mark the door into Christ's kingdom with their blood, that door into which we must "enter through much tribulation;" the very door is sprinkled with the blood of lambs. What sacrifice could more resemble that of the Lamb without spot, than these innocent victims? Innocent lambs have bled since the world began, but as it draws nearer unto the manifestation of Christ, they are innocent children that bleed. These blossoms are

¹ Rev. xiv. 4.

taken to bloom in Heaven, before they are blighted by the world; they lie on the threshold of the everlasting morning: as the Poet of Martyrs says,—

“Little flowers of martyrdom,
Whom the ruthless sword hath torn
On the threshold of the morn,
Rosebuds by the whirlwind shorn!
All regardless of their doom,
'Neath the altar where they lay,
With their palm and chaplets gay,
Little simple ones, they play.”

PRUDENT. HYM. EPIPH.

But the Holy Child has now found that safety in Egypt which Palestine afforded not, as St. Matthew, before he records the slaughter of the infants, thus mentions: “*And He was there till the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet; saying, ‘Out of Egypt have I called My Son.’*” Even as the world shall receive His Church till the persecuting Israel after the flesh is dead. He went into Egypt to prepare a place among the Gentiles, as Joseph of old went down to prepare bread for the chosen people. And the inspired Evangelist himself points out that this was not as a mere accidental human contingency, but all a part of the great dispensation and ordinance of God, as His Word of old by His prophets had shown. For when the Prophet Hosea said, “When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called My son out of Egypt²”; it was of far more than the Patriarchs or the temporal Israel that he spoke: for he pointed out in that history the true Israel, the Child born of the Virgin, and the Son of God given unto us; of Whom it was said, “I will set My love

² Hosea xi. 1.

upon Him," and "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." And the Prophet Balaam, when he speaks of God "bringing him forth out of Egypt³," says, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel. The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a King is among them." But it is evident that in that carnal Israel of old He had seen nothing but iniquity and perverseness: and they had no King,—but the Star that should arise out of Jacob. Thus St. Chrysostom well observes, that Israel after the flesh was not the true son of God; for "he that worships a calf, and is joined to Baal-peor, and sacrifices his sons to devils, is not so truly the son of God, as He that is a son by nature, and honours Him that begat Him. So that the prophecy could not have received its due fulfilment but in Christ. As the Evangelist intimates by saying, 'that it might be fulfilled,' implying that it would not have been fulfilled unless He had come⁴."

Thus Egypt had been marked out of old as the place of retreat: here Abraham found refuge from famine; here Joseph fled from death; here the family of Israel was nurtured; here by the house of Pharaoh was Moses preserved. And now were fulfilled the prophecies of Isaiah concerning Egypt⁵.—"He shall send them a Saviour, and a Great One"—"The Lord shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day."—"They shall return even unto the Lord, and He shall be entreated of them, and shall heal them." Jeremiah also hath said, "I will kindle a fire in the houses of the gods of Egypt; and He shall burn them, and carry them away captives: and He shall array Himself with the land of

³ Numb. xxiii. 22; xxiv. 8.

⁴ In Matt. Hom. viii. 5.

⁵ Isa. xix. 20. 22.

Egypt, as a shepherd putteth on his garment, and He shall go forth from thence in peace⁶." What is all this but a type of the Church, which is called out of the Gentile world, in which she finds refuge at Christ's death? for as far as Israel goes, He is already slain: but escaped by death out of their hands, for God took Him: He is gone away, as the scape-goat into the wilderness, devoted to death, but not dead. The woman that was delivered of the Man Child is fled into the wilderness, but "her Child is caught up unto God and His throne⁷." What is it but a type of the Church spiritually called out of the world, "out of the house of bondage," even as a child, to serve God: arrayed in her spoils, in order to do Him worship. Thus of the spoils of Egypt was the Tabernacle made in the wilderness: thus was Moses arrayed with all the wisdom of Egypt; thus was the Ark kept by the Philistines, and in the house of Dagon, and of Obed-edom the Gittite; thus the wood and the workmanship of the Temple was by Hiram of Tyre; thus were the sacred vessels of the Temple preserved in Babylon; thus the decree of Cyrus the Persian built the Temple of Jerusalem; thus Nebuchadnezzar gave protection to Jeremiah from the persecutions of Israel; thus of Rahab the Canaanite, and of Ruth the Moabite was Christ descended; thus Caesar Augustus ministers to the birth at Bethlehem by the decree of the taxing. Thus St. Paul in the Heathen Arabia spent the preparation for his Gospel; and from the palaces of the Heathen Emperor most effectually preached the same. Thus afterwards most signally Egypt, spiritually the desert, "blossomed like the rose." St. Chrysostom, on the passage, dwells on this contrast,—that the saints and monasteries, and the blessed

⁶ Jer. xliii. 12.

⁷ Rev. xii. 5.

and great Antony, were the first-fruits of this land ; which was afterwards as rich in faith as it had been before rank in wickedness. Perhaps in all this is contained a great mystery in morals also, as it has been elsewhere shown⁸. That the Christian character, by grace, becomes formed from the opposite by nature, out of the Egypt and Babylon of the natural heart, is brought forth the New Jerusalem, in which Christ dwells. Thus "her wilderness" becomes "like Eden ; her desert, like the garden of the Lord." "Instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree." "To the solitary place," "the glory of Lebanon shall be given ; the excellency of Carmel and of Sharon ; they shall see the excellency of our God⁹." He is ever wont, as St. Chrysostom says, to accomplish His dispensations by means of their contraries ; thus it is amidst murders the most bitter, with His birth-place in distress, His mother in flight, that the Prince of Peace, the Saviour, He that overcometh the world, is born.

"And when Herod was dead, behold, an Angel of the Lord in a dream appears to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Arise, take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel ; for they are dead who sought the life of the Child. And he arose and took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel." Thus, with great simplicity and without comment does Holy Scripture speak of the most awful of crimes, "they who sought the Child's life !" as on many other occasions, leaving such things by its silence to the judgment of God, when that judgment shall be at last revealed. And in wonderful expressiveness of language does it again describe the Divine command, and the obedience of Joseph, in a manner similar to what it had done in the going down to

⁸ See Study of Gospels, P. vii. § 5. ⁹ Isa. li. 3 ; lv. 13 ; xxxv. 2.

Egypt; speaking in almost the same words of the Angel's injunction and its fulfilment, as it had done before. On the former occasion, "Arise, and take the young Child and His mother, and flee into Egypt"—"And he arose, and took the young Child and His mother." And now it is, "Arise, and take the young Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel. And he arose, and took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel."

And now, when they had arrived at the Holy Land, we read, "*But when he heard that Archelaus reigned in Judea in the place of Herod his father, he was afraid to go thither.*" It appears therefore, that had it not been for this obstacle which they found on arriving there, that they now intended to make Bethlehem itself or Jerusalem the place of their future abode; either as adhering to the strict letter of the command they had received, to return to the land of Israel; or from a natural and pious wish of making the sacred nation the abode of the Messiah. However that may be, it was according to the rule of all our Lord's dealings, not to retire from the sacred city and sacred nation, till forced to do so by fear of persecution and the rejection of the Jews¹⁰. St. Joseph's being commanded to go to Israel, and his attempt to do so, and his requiring a fresh interference of the Angel to decide him against doing so,—all these things seem to intimate that such attempts were not without a design. The circumstance confirms this yearning over Israel in all the dealings of Christ, as afterwards so signally shown. Thus St. Hilary speaks of it as requiring explanation, that the Angel had given him a command to return to Israel, and therefore he ought not to fear to fulfil it, or the Angel

¹⁰ See Study of Gospels, P. vi. § 1.

ought not to have given a command necessary to be recalled. He explains it by supposing a typical meaning to be contained in it, by Joseph representing the Apostles, bearing Christ about, entrusted to their care. "For when Herod was dead, i.e. when the Jewish nation was destroyed by the death of Christ, they were commanded to preach to the Jews; for they were sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel: but while the dominion of that inheritance of infidelity still existed, they fear to do so, and return. But being warned by a vision to confer the gift of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles, they thither transfer Christ, who is sent to Judea, but called the life and salvation of the Gentiles¹." Now the extraordinary correspondence of this type seems to have arisen from the general principle here stated, that all measures are first taken with Israel, and not without earnest remonstrance are they transferred to the Gentiles. Nor is this inference excluded if we were to take St. Augustin's supposition, that it was from misunderstanding the command of the Angel, and supposing Israel to signify the land of Judea, that the Holy Family proceed thither; till finding that Archelaus reigned there, he considered that Galilee might be considered as a part of it². For in either case it would be equally true that an attempt is made to bring Christ into Judea, but they find in consequence that they are unable to do so.

Humanly speaking, however, the parental guardian of the Holy Child is now in difficulty; and as in a matter so great and Divine he could not venture to trust his own reason, but as in all his former perplexities, so in this also, the supernatural Divine guidance must regulate all things with respect to Christ. "*But being warned*

¹ Com. in Matt. cap. ii. i.

² Consen. Evan. xi. 9.

of God in a dream, he retired into the parts of Galilee; and came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene." Not that the fulfilment of prophecy was their object, for they were returning to their former abode, but that it was thus fulfilled. The well-known difficulty is, that the prophecy is no where found; and this is explained by supposing, as an ancient writer suggests, that it may be among Prophets not admitted into our Canon, as Nathan and Esdras. This appears to have been the opinion of St. Chrysostom, who appeals to the mention of lost books in the Chronicles³. But the objection to this explanation is this, that the prophecy could not have been known to the Jews, who were so well acquainted with the letter of the Scriptures, for Nathanael says, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" and the Pharisees to Nicodemus, "Search and see, for out of Galilee ariseth no Prophet." And St. Jerome well observes, that if he had referred to any distinct prophecy he would not have said "by the Prophets," but by the Prophet. It may be noticed, moreover, that the prophecy lately quoted from Jeremiah is not given by St. Matthew according to the Hebrew, nor according to the Septuagint; which proves that the Evangelist does not refer to the exact words of the prophecy he quotes, but to the sense, and often to the latent sense to be found on consideration: in the same manner therefore now he may be called a Nazarene. Thus St. Jerome refers the expression, not to the mere word, but to the sense; for Nazarene means Holy. And the typical order of legal sanctity of which Samuel was, had, we know,

³ 2 Chron. ix. 29; xii. 15; xiii. 22.

this name. But St. Jerome also refers to the possibility of its being found in the exact letter of the Hebrew in Isaiah, "There shall come a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Nazarene shall grow out of his roots"—by the change of one letter in the Hebrew into another not altogether different in sound; but it does not seem a natural interpretation. However it may be explained, it is evident that the fulfilment of prophecy in this point must always have been after a secret and mysterious manner; for, as before observed, the Jews did not perceive it. Certainly, this title of our Lord's is strongly marked afterwards as peculiarly His: it is inscribed on His Cross, and He is by this name often spoken of by the Apostles⁴. The very name is connected with the "great mystery of godliness;" the word itself signifies Holy; but the place designated by it is proverbial for every thing ignoble and despised. For at Jerusalem,—the Holy City,—the palace of Kings,—the seat of David,—the place of the oracles of God,—the residence of the Prophets,—the Sion and Temple of God,—the glory of the world,—the chosen people of God, had rejected Him, He "chooses weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are." So that His elect also in Him may say, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me"—"For when I am weak, then am I strong."

⁴ Acts ii. 22; iii. 6; iv. 10; vi. 14.

SECTION XIV

THE CHILDHOOD OF CHRIST

WE have often occasion to notice the custom of Holy Scripture, to withdraw from our view things in themselves most holy and full of the deepest interest, and to cover with a cloud of impenetrable silence the comings and goings of Him, Whose ways are in the deep waters. But that silence is to us most suitable and awe-inspiring, and often occurs before the coming of great events ; as in the compassing of Jericho with the Ark before the trumpet sounded, and as the silence of half an hour in Heaven. But in the meanwhile, the things which break forth from that silence are as the Voice of God from the Cloud, to which we listen with the more devout attention. And if the Form of the Son of God is visible beneath the Cloud, full of glory unspeakable, it is only witnessed by a few, and they are forbidden to divulge the same, but partially and after a time ; like St. Paul when he had been in the third Heaven, and heard words which it is not lawful for man to utter. And indeed the doings of God are especially in secret ; the formation of the secret spirit, and gradual unfoldings of the same under the hand of God, are wrapt around by that Hand which folds up the bud till its appointed time, and secretly fashions the body in the womb ; and all seems emblematical of this our state, where the soul is being formed in secret, and out of the view of man till the great manifestation. God has hid from view the workings and developments of the spirit of man. Thus, after our Lord's earliest infancy and

birth, He retires from our view, and until thirty years of age nothing is known of all the events of His infancy and childhood and youth. They are wrapt up in that reserve and secrecy which marks the opening bud, the natural retirement of youth, the awful modesties of holiness and sorrow. One circumstance and one occasion alone breaks through that silence, when He was twelve years of age; and that indeed, though replete with the deepest interest and instruction, yet leaves on the mind the strongest impression that there is more signified by it than the mere narrative bears on the surface—some hidden mystery or prophecy or doctrine, and probably all these together.

It is St. Luke that mentions all these circumstances of our Lord's birth and early years which are of a domestic nature, as if, as some suppose, instructed in these things by the Virgin Mother; and this incident is certainly one which to the blessed Mary herself must have appeared afterwards a subject of touching reflection; as the ways of Providence appear to us on the retrospect, which were at the time most deep and inscrutable, but were found eventually most full of merciful intervention. St. Luke passes to the account immediately from that of the Purification. "*And when they had accomplished all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned unto Galilee, to their own city Nazareth;*" to that ignoble country, and to that little obscure village among the mountains, and to a rude, no doubt, and quiet cottage, more suited to the condition of man, and far better for man in this his condition than the houses of the wealthy; not only setting at nought human pride, but hallowing the lowly habitations of retirement and poverty. This was the abode of the most blessed Virgin, the haunt most beloved of highest Angels, the dwelling-place of the Prince of Peace and

Everlasting God. Here, in retirement and privacy, "*the Child grew, and was strengthened in spirit, being filled with wisdom.*" "The Lord is great, and worthy to be praised, there is no end of His greatness," says the Psalmist; and the greatness of which there is no end admitteth not of increase. But like the other children of Adam, "the Son of man" grew from an infant to the state of childhood, and from the state of childhood to manhood; and as He grew in that human body and human soul which He was pleased to take for our sakes, so was He strengthened in His spirit in the inner man⁵. For this is the "Rod out of the stem of Jesse," of Which it is said, "the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding," "and shall make Him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord⁶;" where it is evidently of "the Son of Man" and of the Child of Mary that it is written. As His human Body grew from childhood to maturity, so did His human Soul also, having to "learn obedience by the things which He suffered;" for infirmities and sufferings His Divine nature could not know: by subjection He had to learn obedience; by pain He had to learn patience; by infirmities reliance on God. So that by these He gained the victory, and had authority and power and a kingdom given unto Him, and prepared for Him from before the foundation of the world: so that He says, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame." The very same words being before used by this Evangelist concerning the Baptist, that he "grew and was strengthened in spirit," seem to imply that they are spoken of Christ, in that which He had in common with His servant—the nature of man. But here alone it is added, "being

⁵ Eph. iii. 16.

⁶ Isa. xi. 1-3.

filled with wisdom." The fulness of wisdom as a child is not human, Origen observes, but Divine. Being already "filled," for "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" "of His fulness have all we received." But of the term "increase," applied to Him, Origen beautifully observes, "He had humbled Himself in taking the form of a servant, and in that power in which He had humbled Himself He increases. He had appeared weak because He had taken to Himself a weak body, and on that account He again is strengthened. The Son of God had emptied Himself, and therefore He is again filled with wisdom⁷:" *"And the grace of God was upon Him."*

"Now His parents went up yearly to Jerusalem at the feast of the Passover." This the Law had required of all the holy nation, for at Jerusalem must be the great Sacrifice; there shall all nations come when the holy Jerusalem shall have prepared that Sacrifice; for "many nations shall come and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the House of the God of Jacob⁸." In sign of which, according to the Law, every male in the sacred nation had thither to go up three times in every year—three in one in mysterious sanctity of number. The blessed Virgin, also, went with her Son, though not required of the Law, in abundant fulfilment, according to the superabundant graciousness of God; for "A woman shall compass a man."

"And when He was twelve years of age." Twelve is the perfect number; twelve years of age was the damsel raised from the dead; twelve years had the woman that was healed suffered from an issue of blood; in the twelfth year came to Ezekiel the prophecy of the fall of Egypt⁹; at the end of twelve months Nebuchadnezzar was glorying

⁷ Hom. in Luc. xix.

⁸ Micah iv. 2.

⁹ Ezek. xxxii. 11.

when he fell¹⁰. In the twelve stones, and twelve pillars, and twelve oxen—in the twelve Tribes, and twelve Prophets, and twelve Apostles, it is Christ in the twelve; as the sun in the twelve months of the year. “At the twelfth year,” says St. Ambrose, “the Lord began to dispute in the temple; because twelve must needs be the number of Evangelical teachers for preaching the faith.” “Twelve,” says Bede, “signifies universality in things and times; and the glory of Christ, by which all things and times are to be filled, here takes its beginning¹.” “*And when they had gone up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast, and had finished the days*”—having continued there for seven days, as the ordinance of the feast required—“*as they were returning, the child Jesus remained in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother knew not of it. But thinking He was in the company*”—for very large was the caravan or company that proceeded to Jerusalem on these occasions, as there was the same definite period for their coming and returning to all—“*they proceeded a day’s journey; and were seeking for Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance.*” It was naturally the case in such large and promiscuous assemblages, for persons of the same household to be found rather among their acquaintance than with one another; particularly when persons of the same country, city, and village would be travelling in companies together. “*And when they found Him not, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him. And it came to pass after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the Teachers, both hearing them and asking them questions.*” God shall ever be found in His temple; the Son of God is ever there—but as a Child, with infinite lowliness con-

¹⁰ Dan. iv. 29.¹ Aur. Cat. in Luc. p. 93.

descending to meet us in our infirmities; and we as a little child must seek Him, or we shall not find Him there. Bishop Taylor beautifully supposes that in their perplexity at not finding Him, they came to the Temple to pray; being confident that if they found God, they would not be far from Christ². "*And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers.*" For as the Evangelist had said before, "the grace of God was upon Him," in some marvellous manner; and hereby was the fulfilling of that prophecy³ before alluded to, that "the Spirit of God shall rest upon Him," "and shall make Him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord; and He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears." They were astonished at His doctrine: "wondering," says Bede, "at the high things they hear, and the lowly things they see; knowing not the mystery, that unto us a Child is born, who is the Everlasting God⁴." It was, moreover, humanly speaking, an age when the words and ways are noticed and remembered; especially if connected with circumstances of great promise; for then, as at the time of birth, the development of future destinies may be, and character begins to be marked. Here, also, appears in one point of view the first indication of that which was afterwards so remarkable; that "the people were astonished at His doctrine;" that "all wondered at the gracious words which proceeded from His mouth;" that they said, "never man spake like this Man." Moreover, this was ever afterwards His mode of teaching the Scribes and Pharisees, by asking them questions, thus to lead them to the understanding of their own Scriptures, according to the light within which He furnishes to those who wait

² Worthy Commun. Introd.³ Isa. xi. 3.⁴ Isa. ix. 6.

for Him⁵. This was not teaching them in that manner which He might have done, but with that suitableness which became a child's age, "hearing them and asking them questions;" "giving us an example," as Gregory well observes, "that the weak presume not to teach; if that little Child was willing to be taught by asking questions, Who through the power of His Divinity Himself supplied to those very doctors the word of knowledge." And Origen, also, long before, "Because He was a little Child He is found in the midst of teachers, hallowing and instructing them. And as being a little Child, He is found amidst them, not teaching them but asking questions. And this He did according to the duty of His age, to teach us what is suitable for children, however wise and learned they may be; that they should rather desire to hear their masters than teach them."

"And His parents when they saw Him were amazed. And," when they had retired from the concourse and were alone, *"His mother said unto Him, Child, what hast Thou thus done unto us?"* words not of reproof but of wonder and sorrow, *"Behold, Thy father and I have sought for Thee sorrowing."* It was seeking Him as we seek God in the Scriptures, with difficulty perhaps and sorrow at not succeeding in our search, yet not from distrust in God; knowing indeed that He is there; but sorrowing, perhaps, with some impatience, that we cannot find Him; and possibly with something of misgiving⁶. But it is said with surprise and grief by the holy Mother, *"Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing."* And surely, humanly speaking, it was strange that He should have caused them this sorrow, unless some great and Divine purpose was to be answered thereby, not only

⁵ See *The Passion*, p. 191, 192. ⁶ Orig. in *Luc. Hom.* xix.

in God's designs towards His Church, but to themselves also. "*And He said unto them, How is it that ye sought Me?*" In this your search and your sorrow there was a want of faith: it is not the apparent absence of Christ from you to which you are to assign your grief; but your not sufficiently seeing and confiding in His gracious dealings towards you. It is He that bereaves parents of their children, not that they might have sorrow (for in their afflictions He is afflicted), but that they might have faith in Him, Who seems thereby to say to them, as now to His earthly parents, "what I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." "*Know ye not that it behoves Me to be in My Father's house,*" or in My Father's business. Origen, St. Augustin, Epiphanius, and others, consider it to signify, in My Father's house or temple; but the expression seems to intimate that, and more than that, in the original, and may equally well be taken in either of these senses or in both; whereas an English translation would necessarily confine it in either way. It was His meat to do the will of His Father that sent Him, to be doing His work, this it is that He opposes to all things else. Correcting also the saying of His Mother, who spake of Joseph as His father, He makes mention of His true Father in Heaven: correcting rather than reproving, but in the accents of reproof teaching. And thus also His own disciples He seems to reprove for want of knowledge, when that knowledge implied faith. It is elsewhere observed, that in all our Lord's replies to His mother on record, it appears mysteriously indicated that in the things of God she is not to interfere. "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" "There are in Christ," says St. Ambrose, "two generations; the one that of His Father, the other

of His mother: that of the Father Divine, but that of the mother which descends to our labour and usage. And therefore those things which take place beyond nature, beyond age, beyond custom, are not to be ascribed to human virtues, but to be referred to Divine powers. For on another occasion His mother impels to a mystery: here His mother is reproved, because she still requires things which are human¹."

"And they understood not the saying that He spake unto them." For who can by searching find out God? "Though a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea farther, though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it²." But it was not of this the hidden knowledge of God that they understood not, but more after a human manner of speaking; they could not comprehend in any manner conduct so mysterious, that it behoved Him to be in His Father's house! It was like His Divine teaching afterwards, when not only of the unbelieving Jews was it said, that "they understood not that He spake to them of the Father," but even of the disciples at the last: for after St. Peter had confessed Him to be the Son of God, and our Lord had declared his blessedness in having this revealed to him of the Father: yet in His last discourse in St. John's Gospel, they understood not His high and deep sayings of the Father. We need not, therefore, wonder, that even in the case of the blessed Virgin herself, although the spirit was willing, yet the flesh was weak, to comprehend the greatness of those things, of which she had been made the high and mysterious instrument. The whole transaction is indeed marked with something very deep and Divine. He is only seen

¹ Expos. in Luc. lib. ii. 64.

² Eccles. viii. 17.

once as a Child, and then it is in the Temple ; as the child Samuel prefigured ; as children singing in the Temple proclaimed His Kingdom ; and follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth in Heaven. Once only from His Childhood is the holy veil withdrawn, and we see Him in His Temple ; His parents seeking Him for three days sorrowing, while He is in His Father's business ; engaged in the mighty work of God in the Redemption of man. One prefigurative and solemn effect of this incident has been shown in another place⁹.

They sought for Him among His kinsfolk and acquaintance, but He is not among His kindred of the flesh, for "His brethren believed not on Him¹," and in seeing saw Him not. Nor is He to be found in the mixed multitude ; but He is to be found in the Temple ; He is among those that sit in Moses' seat, though they know Him not, nor by what authority He is there. As a Child, He teaches the Doctors, and with all the docility and simplicity of a Child, asking them questions ; showing thereby the nature of His Kingdom, the mysteries of which are revealed unto babes, and hid from the wise and prudent, who have to learn of babes. "He is found after three days in the Temple," says St. Ambrose, "that it might be an indication, that after the three days of His triumphant Passion He, Who was believed to be dead, should rise again, and offer Himself in the Heavenly seat and Divine honour to our faith²." He is in His Father's house and in His Father's business after three days' disappearance, when they had accomplished the seven days of the Jewish festival : and blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed. Thus, at the Resurrection He appears to say to them, how is it that ye

⁹ See *The Passion*, p. 336.

¹ John vii. 5.

² In *Luc. lib. ii. 36*.

sought Me sorrowing? "O ye of little faith, wherefore did ye doubt?"

"And He went down with them ;"—these very words "He went down with them," Origen thinks mysteriously expressive of His humility ;—"*and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.*" Here also have we the perfect pattern of obedience, honour, and subjection unto parents, excepting where it interferes with duty to God ; and then it is set aside, and we are taught that higher lesson, that "he that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me : " that the fifth commandment, though great in its promises, and the foundation of all duty to men, yet comes after the four which contain our duty to God—the four pillars of the world. Therefore He stayed in Jerusalem while they knew not of it, on account of the greater duty He owed to God—by a Divine purpose. Obedience is the perfection of man ; and if in this case it was shown to inferiors, as occupying parental place ; so also was Christ's obedience to the Law perfect and entire in all respects, although Himself infinitely above it. And if this subjection was shown not to parents only, but even to a reputed father also ; so, in like manner, was it when He sent Peter to obtain the means requisite for discharging the tribute money, yet He first taught him that it was over and above what could be rightly claimed of Him, for the children were free³. By all this, was He teaching us no doubt the perfection of filial obedience, as Origen observes : and that "if we have not parents, we should be subject to those who have the age of parents. And why should I speak of parents? If Jesus the Son of God is subject to Joseph and Mary, shall I not be subject to my

³ Matt. xvii. 26.

Bishop, who has been constituted my father of God? Shall I not be subject to my Priest, who is set over me by the vouchsafement of the Lord? Let every one therefore observe, that an inferior person is often set over those that are greater than he⁴."

Here again we have an intimation of that pensive and reflecting spirit, the marked characteristic of the blessed Virgin, noticed not by this Evangelist alone; the disciple of her own Child, as His handmaid, while she received from Him perfect obedience as His mother; storing up His words and reflecting upon them, desirous to know, and coming by degrees to understand their Divine fulness. "*And His mother kept all these sayings in her heart;*" it is not exactly the word this Evangelist had before used, for the former expression was rather "kept to herself" (συνετήρει) in distinction from the Shepherds, but this is rather "persevered in keeping" (διετήρει). "She was suspecting," says Origen, "something more than of man; wherefore she preserved all His words in her heart, not as of those of a child of twelve years of age, but of Him Who was conceived of the Holy Ghost."

"*And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature.*" In this state of subjection He advanced in wisdom, not as God the Word, but as Man, for to perfect manhood growth and increase is needful; but as the separation and distinction between our Lord's Godhead and human Soul is a mystery infinitely above us, and to look into which too curiously, is to look into the Ark of God; so this increase in wisdom is mysterious; but no less mysterious would it have been, if He had not grown in wisdom, and unharmonious with the other parts of Catholic truth.

⁴ In Luc. Hom. xx.

He was Almighty in Godhead, yet His Body and Soul received increase; thus not only in bodily affections, but in affections of the soul also, He was as Man; He learned obedience; He marvelled; He felt surprise as at the breaking in of new knowledge: or as St. Cyril says, He appeared to men as partaking of these bodily affections which we see in man. "Not," says St. Cyril, "as if that nature, which was perfect from the beginning, received increase, but that by degrees it was manifested. For the law of nature brooks not that man should have higher faculties than the age of His body permits. The Word (made man) was perfect: but He manifested Himself as Man with a body, gradually advancing in growth; and was daily thought wiser by those who saw and heard Him⁶."

"And," not only in Soul and Body did He advance, but also "*in favour with God and man*:" fulfilling thereby the words of Solomon, which were truly spoken of Him alone, as the only perfect pattern of obedience—"My Son, let thine heart keep my commandments;—let not mercy and truth forsake thee;—so shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man⁶." He was already advancing to that perfection and fulness of stature, to which testimony was afterwards borne, "this is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." But how, it may be asked, could He advance in favour with man? for "all that live godly shall suffer persecution." It may be that men suffer for righteousness' sake, when the light of their example becomes a witness against others or excites their envy: but the virtues and holiness of a child consist so much in meekness and subjection, that they kindle love and excite interest

⁶ Cyril, Thess. 1. x. c. 7.

⁶ Prov. iii. 4.

among elders : the witness of goodness which displeases, and the envy it excites, are to be found more among equals in age. Or it may be even as is said of Him afterwards, that He was "glorified of all;" that they "wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth;" that they "hung upon" His words: for even under persecution there is always unwilling testimony to the intrinsic loveliness of virtue.

PART II

The Baptism in Jordan

“Who layeth the beams of His chambers in the waters.”

SECTION I

THE ETERNAL GENERATION OF CHRIST

THE account has as yet been confined to St. Matthew and St. Luke; and has been that of our Lord's human generation, and His early years on earth. We come now to St. John, of His Divine generation,—of that King and Priest Who is “without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life.” For this Evangelist commences not as the others from below, but from above. “*In the beginning was the Word,*” the Word unspeakable, the manifestation of the Father to His creatures: but if existing before all things, where was He? He was with God. “*And the Word was with God,*” in union incomprehensible, co-equal, and co-eternal, in unity of Substance, but distinct in Person. “In the beginning,” in God the Beginning of all things; in eternity which was before all things. He therefore never had beginning, for in the beginning He *was*; “in

the beginning the Heavens and the earth were made," but then He "*was*," was already in being. As our Lord Himself speaks to the Father in His prayer, "the glory which I had with Thee before the world was¹." As under the Name of Wisdom, He says, "The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths," "before the mountains were settled," "while as yet He had not made the earth," "when He prepared the Heavens," "then I was by Him²." The Word—it is the ineffable Name surpassing comprehension, communicated alone unto him who leaned on His breast; who passed from the knowledge of Him as seen in the flesh, to His unspeakable Godhead: in thoughts to which he gave utterance, by that which though formed by sensible organs is the most incorporeal of all things, the Word. As shadow expresses the presence of outward substance, as light and heat the presence of fire, as the stream flows from the fountain, being the same as that from which it flows, so words express outwardly the inner man, execute its intentions, communicate its substance. But He is the Son, not according to sonship such as we know of, but after some inconceivable manner coeval with the Father, for the Son never had beginning no more than the Father, as light ever flows from fire, nor had the fire existence, but coeval with it; as shadow is coeval with and inseparable from substance; so, though He be the Son, yet not according to mortal thought or expression. Nor is He the Word according to our words, but with power inherent to execute, for "the Word goeth forth, conquering and to conquer;" with power to discern, for the Word "discerneth the thoughts;" It is the Foun-

¹ John xvii. 5.

² Prov. viii. 22. 30.

dation and the Crown, the Beginning and the End of all things. His Name is such, "that no man knew but He Himself," says St. John, yet in the next verse he says, that "His Name is called the Word of God." His Name then is unspeakable, but to us He is the Word. The Word by Whom God created all things, and by Whom He redeemed all things, for by and in and for the Word is the new creation. As He spake, and the earth and the Heavens were made: so "He hath spoken unto us by His Son;" and His "Word shall not return unto Him void." He is the Word, as St. John himself explains, for "He Who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." Though He is ever revealing Him on earth, yet the Word is with the Father, for there are Three that bear record in Heaven—the Father, the Word, and the Spirit. Yet He goeth forth, sitting upon the White Horse, "clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and His Name is called the Word of God."

But not only was the Word with God. "*And the Word was God.*" This also is the great eternal verity, which to believe rightly is everlasting life; for many believe in the Word of God—*Verbum Dei*—but the Catholic Church only in God the Word—*Verbum Deus*—in all its fulness and harmony of doctrines; neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance: for He was "with God," therefore is there plurality of Persons: but also He "was God," therefore is there unity of Substance. Nor is this union in time only, but before all time and all creation: "*He was in the beginning with God,*" at that period of which Moses speaks in Genesis, "in the beginning." "*All things were made by Him;*" but as if even this was not sufficient to declare His eternal existence before all things, and strict unity of Substance

with the Father, the Evangelist adds, "*And without Him was not any thing made that was made.*" Thus is it again and again repeated by the Evangelist, taking up his own words, and putting them in another form, as in legal title-deeds, or as in great Articles of faith, or as in some solemn chant ; for as the Church stands on this truth, faith in the Son of God, this is first laid down as the title to our inheritance, the great Catholic verity, the new song of faith. But ancient writers speak of different punctuations on this passage, taking away the stop at "made : " the first of these is, " that which was made was life in Him ; " which St. Augustin and many Latin writers adopt, as Tertullian, Cyprian ; and some Greek, as Origen, Cyprian, Clemens Alexandrinus. Another is, " without Him was not any thing made which was made in Him." But that which we now have in use is the one approved of by St. Chrysostom, and most Greek writers, and many Latin, as by St. Ambrose and St. Jerome, whereby we carry on the words "in Him " to the succeeding clause and the next verse. For after declaring His eternal Godhead, the beloved disciple proceeds to speak of that Godhead in Its manifestation to mankind. "*In Him was life ; and the life was the light of men ;*" the light, not of angels, not of any other creatures on earth, but of men ; for although, as Origen says, "He is the light of Angels," yet of men only does the Evangelist here speak. He is according to His own declaration, the true Life and the true Light ; for "as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given the Son to have life in Himself ;" essential life in Himself, as no creature hath life, the self-existing Substance. "Who only," saith St Paul, "hath immortality." For this life is the first and great attribute of God, "I AM ;" "I live, saith the Lord." It has been well observed how St. John

delights in this word "Life," as applied to Christ, frequently repeating it, not only in his Gospel, but also in his Epistles. Thus, as if interpreting this passage, he says in the latter, "God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life." And St. Paul in like manner, "Your life is hid with Christ in God : when Christ Who is our life shall appear." Thus, passing beyond sensible and material things in Divine contemplation, this Evangelist descends from them to things human ; speaking as none others have spoken, as one who having once known Christ after the flesh, now knows Him no more, but speaks of the Word as God and with God. Step by step does the Divine teacher descend from highest Heaven to earth : "in the beginning"—the Word with God—then the creatures made—then He is the Life of those creatures—then the Light—then made Flesh—then dwelling in them ; and the human witness the Baptist.

"And the Light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness comprehended It not." As on the first day of creation He made the light and gave it to be with the darkness, day alternating with night ; so on the first day of the new creation, at His Resurrection, He the true Light arose and shineth in the darkness : darkness and light are both on earth—His kingdom of light is in that world which lieth in wickedness. He is in the world, but manifests not Himself to the world. "The light cometh on the darkness," says Origen, "is pursued by it, and is plotted against, not apprehended nor overtaken." And they also who, partaking of that light, are themselves enlightened, communicate light to others : therefore He saith to His own, "Ye are the light of the world." They are genuine light, but have no fountain of light within themselves ; they are as the moon and stars, warm and radiant, but not with their

own light. "Being the Light of the world," says the same writer, "He lighteneth not bodies ; but by His bodiless power enlightens the bodiless mind. So that each of us, enlightened by that Sun, may be able to discern all things spiritual³." And the darkness is of course put for those that live in darkness, as' "Ye were once darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." "Foolish hearts," saith St. Augustin, "receive not the Light ; but let them not therefore think that the Light is absent, because they cannot see ; for they on account of their sins are darkness. The man that is blind cannot see in the sun ; but the sun is not on that account the less present. Cleanse from thine eye whatever is evil, that thou mayest behold the Light of thine eyes ; for the pure in heart shall see God⁴."

But His comings and His goings are not as God but as man. For God is every where present ; God comes as man that we might know Him as God ; He comes in a cloud, hid in the cloud of humanity, and therefore as hidden He needeth testimony ; as God He needeth not that any should testify, but as manifest in the flesh, as man. And when Christ took upon Himself His kingdom, on His entering into Jerusalem and teaching in the Temple at the last, He first of all appealed to the testimony of John the Baptist, which He had also before adduced to the Jews, "Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth ;" for there must needs be a witness—"If I bear witness of Myself My witness is not true." According, therefore, to the example of his Divine Master, this Evangelist commences with reference to the Baptist's testimony : "*There was a man sent from God whose name was John.*" All things are in Divine order and commission, as our Lord Himself appeals so frequently to His own Apostle-

³ In Joan. Tr. i. 24.

⁴ In Joan. Tr. i. 19.

ship, as being sent from God : " He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God ;" " Neither came I of Myself, but He sent Me ;" and a mission also the same as that of the Apostles, " As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." And even of the Holy Spirit the same is said, " Whom the Father will send in My name." Thus, also, was it in the Old Testament, as well as in the New, as in Isaiah ⁵, " I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send?" and to Jeremiah, " Thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee ⁶;" and to Ezekiel, " Son of man, I send thee ⁷." In like manner is this mission of the Baptist frequently set forth, " Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face."

And this Divine sending and apostleship is for the purpose of bearing witness. The Holy Spirit " Whom the Father will send in My name," is the great Witness : of the Apostles it is said, " Ye are witnesses:" the Law was to be " for a witness ⁸:" the Gospel is sent forth " as a witness to all nations:" and the crown of the Gospel is martyrdom, or the bearing witness to the Light. All these, as the holy Baptist himself, are sent not only " to prepare a people made ready for the Lord," but to do so by bearing witness. "*He came for a witness, that He might bear witness concerning the Light, in order that all men through Him might believe*"—might through Christ come to the faith and see God's salvation ; or rather with St. Chrysostom, which seems the best interpretation, through him the forerunner might believe in Christ. " That all men," for it was not only for a few, but for Pharisees, Sadducees, and Roman soldiers and publicans, preparing the reception in the hearts of men, that they might " all" see the salvation of God. "*He*

⁵ Isa. vi. 8.⁶ Jer. i. 7.⁷ Ezek. ii. 3.⁸ Deut. xxxi. 26.

was not the Light, but” he came as the forerunner, “*that he might bear witness concerning the Light.*” For whatever light the Baptist had was not his own light; he was but as the star which precedes the sun; and is only radiant with the light which he receives from Him, the true Light; but this Light lightens the Baptist also, so that he was as Christ testified, “a burning and shining light.” But “*He,*” Christ Himself, “*was the true Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.*” He enlighteneth all men, for whoever is enlightened is enlightened by none but by Him, as St. Augustin takes it; or all men that are willing to receive His light, as St. Chrysostom and others understand the place: perhaps we may explain it in both senses; for He enlightens all men in some sense—more perfectly His own disciples only—those to whom He manifests Himself as not unto the world. Or, as Origen says, “He spiritually lighteneth all those who through the regeneration of grace, which is given through Baptism, come into the world invisible:”—in that manifestation of Christ for which all creation waiteth, of which all manifestations beforehand are but forerunners. He enlighteneth all men that come into the world; for all have conscience or the moral sense; although in darkness and the shadow of death, yet in that darkness the light shineth. He enlighteneth by Baptism, for that is “the Illumination;” He enlighteneth by repentance, for “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light;” He enlighteneth by obedience, for “the commandment of the Lord giveth light unto the eyes;” He enlighteneth by the natural conscience, for, as St. Paul says, “That which may be known of God is manifest in them;” He enlighteneth by His external providence, for, “He left not

Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from Heaven." In all times, therefore, is it according to His own declaration, "I am the Light of the world, He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." In all times and in every nation there hath been in the heart of man a Light, revealing itself according to their obedience to the Witness therein—in the philosophy of the Greeks, and in the piety or natural dutifulness of the Roman, though nearly overwhelmed with the darkness; but wherever, in sage or poet, in man or child, a better spirit hath shone, it hath been Christ giving light. And in the Law, with lifeless rites and sacrifices, the glimpses and guesses of better things, and the acceptableness of all offerings, have been only through Christ; "The secret of the Lord, which is with them that fear Him," and to whom "He shows His covenant;" for "In Thy light," says the Psalmist, "shall we see light." And if revealed of old to both Jew and Gentile according to their obedience, so now is He hidden excepting to obedience; for "he that says he is in the light and hateth his brother is in darkness." Before He "was made Flesh, and dwelt among us," He was in the world by His providence, by His Spirit, and His servants, ruling, controlling, warning, punishing, and was seen or known in such—but even now by many not seen, nor known in the same. "*He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not.*" The creature was made by Him, but knew Him not; for man, the rational lord of that creation, had by sin fallen, and could not acknowledge his Maker. Other creatures, indeed, knew Him—the sun, the earth, the sea, the stars, they acknowledge Him; but they in whose hearts the creature is rather than the Creator—they in whose hearts

the world is, they are called "the world," as they in whose hearts God is are called "the sons of God." "Did not the creature," says St. Austin⁹, "acknowledge its Creator? The Heavens gave testimony by the star; the sea gave testimony by bearing its walking Lord; the winds gave testimony and were stilled at His command; the earth gave testimony by trembling at His crucifixion: but the world means those that love the world, in whose heart the world is." "*He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.*" He came not to Angels, but as the Son of man to men, and they received Him not. So some ancient writers explain it, as St. Irenæus, Origen, Clemens Alexandrinus: others, as St. Cyprian, Cyril, Chrysostom, Augustin, that He came unto His own nation, His own Holy City, His own appointed Priesthood, but they were the first to condemn Him. And even in lesser matters was it shown that "a man's foes shall be those of his own household;" for neither did His brethren believe in Him¹; Nazareth cast Him out²; one of the twelve, His chosen household, betrayed Him.

Thus every sentence of this Evangelist, in sublime simplicity of Divine language, contains greatest truths ever known in the world, pervading all time, and more or less developed according to the various dispensations of God. But in all these cases, although rejected by His own, yet a remnant hath been found. "*But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to those that believe on His Name.*" For by faith is He received into the heart, and those who receive Him partake of His Sonship: for by His Spirit in their souls they instinctively cry, "Abba, Father!" They receive Him and become His inheritance, as the

⁹ In Joan. Tr. iii. 5.

¹ John vii. 5.

² Luke iv. 29.

Psalmist had promised ; and He in return becomes also their inheritance, says Augustin. "The Lord Himself is the portion of mine inheritance." "Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." "Whether they be servants or free, whether Greeks or Barbarians, whether ignorant or wise, whether women or men, whether children or aged, all are made worthy of the same honour—so great His loving-kindness." Sons "*which*" were born, "*not of blood*"—not of bloods, as it is in the original, that is not of certain descents by which earthly inheritance and sonship is transferred, as the Jews expected from the blood of Abraham and David, by natural lineage, the inheritance of the promises :—"nor of the will of flesh," whereby the offspring of sinful Adam are propagated : for "that which is born of flesh is flesh," and "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God :"—"*nor of the will of man*," according to the adoption or birth of legal or of natural heirs,—"*but were born of God*." He sets forth, as St. Chrysostom says, the vileness of the first birth, in order to contrast with it the loftiness of the second.

"*And the Word became Flesh*"—for the flesh hath sinned, soul and body have sinned, therefore He assumes soul and body, that both may be sanctified. "*And the Word became Flesh, and tabernacled among us*," for "the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them." As He tabernacled of old with His chosen in the wilderness, not in a fixed temple, or house "that hath foundations," but sojourning in a Tabernacle. For in order that He might show us that He would have us to be in tabernacles "as strangers and pilgrims" upon earth ; He sojourned with His own people in a Tabernacle, to be but as a stranger and pilgrim on earth like ourselves : and thus did He make the flesh His tabernacle,

dwelling bodily among us for a time. Or we may read it that He "tabernacled within us," for "the Kingdom of God," said our Lord, "is within you." For the Word becoming flesh hath mysteriously united Itself with us; communicating Himself from Heaven to body and soul in the Eucharist, entering into the temple of the inner man, as His tabernacle did of old into the Temple at Jerusalem. Thus too even now by His Spirit He sojourns in the Church His tabernacle.

"*And we have seen His glory.*" St. John saw His glory when He was transfigured on the Mount; of which St. Peter also bears witness, "for we have not followed cunningly devised fables, but were eye-witnesses of His Majesty;" and at the opening of his Epistle, St. John breaks forth into a similar exclamation, "That Which was from the beginning, Which we have seen with our eyes, Which we have looked upon." Not only sensibly, but spiritually also the Apostles say, "We have seen His glory;" as St. Paul also bears witness, "but we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord;" and again, "what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, God hath revealed unto us by His Spirit." "In order that we might be able to behold His Glory," says St. Chrysostom, "He was made Man; for otherwise no man can see His Glory and live." "By that nativity," says St. Augustin, "He made eye-salve, by means of which our eyes and our hearts might be cleansed, that we might be able through His Humanity to see His Majesty." "We beheld His Glory, *the Glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father.*" Such as could alone belong to Him; a natural, inherent glory, such as would prove Him of one Substance with and the Only-begotten of the Father. Not as the glory of Moses, a borrowed and reflected lustre, "a horned

glory," as it is said, and like the waning moon, but such as could only belong to the true Son of God. Thus did He tabernacle among us, not in the severity and shadows of the Law, but all Divine love and Heavenly reality, "*full of grace and truth.*" Pre-eminently in Him was no guile—all stable, substantial, true. He is the Truth, for all things else when compared with Him are not real; they are shadows, He the Substance; they are types, He the Archetype; they the semblances, He the Reality. He is the true Light, the true Vine, the true Bread, the living Water. And He is "full of grace," because He only is Love, compared with Whom men are evil. The Law, indeed, was by Moses, but that was not the true tabernacle³, nor the true sacrifice, nor the true High Priest, nor the true Temple of God; but all things that are true are in Christ. And He is "full of truth" because He fulfilled the Law, "full of grace" because He fulfilled the promise given before the Law—ininitely gracious and true.

"*John beareth witness of Him, and cried, saying, This was He of Whom I spake, He that cometh after me was before me; for He was first,*" or before me. For He is indeed pre-eminently the first, "the First and the Last⁴." St. John here mentions that even the Baptist had alluded (perhaps in the presence of himself and a few more, or, it may be, proclaiming aloud to all) to this His pre-existence. There is, indeed, in thus taking the passage, something like tautology; but it is an expressive and emphatic mode of speech common with this Evangelist. There have always been some who thus translate it; yet the consent of antiquity seems in favour of our common version, "is preferred before me, for He was before me"—i. e. was greater than I—"was more illustrious," says St. Chry-

³ Heb. viii. 2.

⁴ Rev. i. 17; xxii. 13.

sostom, "and honourable than I am." The original Greek seems to combine the two senses, as no translation can do. St. Cyril seems peculiar in taking it, "He that cometh after me—i. e. He that appears inferior to me—was before me—i. e. far above me:" thus giving a sense different from ours to the first clause of the sentence.

The beloved Disciple now resumes his former words, after inserting this testimony of the Baptist to His pre-existence; recurring to the same most Divine strain in which he had been speaking concerning his Lord, in words that appear but the continuance and explanation of his former statement. But St. Augustin, Chrysostom, Athanasius, and Theophylact, seem to take the words for those of the Baptist down to the expression "no man hath seen God;" and Origen still further, including the following verse also, down to the words, "hath declared Him," all of which he ascribes to the testimony of the Baptist.

But we may suppose the Evangelist himself to be thus proceeding with his own words, "*And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.*" He had before stated He was "full of grace and truth," he now therefore adds, "and of His fulness have we received." He fulfilled the Law, and out of His fulness He gave to us; we are no longer under the Law, which He fulfilled in truth, "but under grace;" all is grace to us, free goodness and bounty of God, giving goodness by Himself now, and crowning all goodness by Himself hereafter. According to this His grace we also receive by our nearness to Him "according to the measure of the gift of Christ." We receive grace according to and corresponding with His grace, in proportion to His abundance and fulness. "*For the Law was given by Moses,*" being but the shadow of good things to come, and the preparation of men's hearts

to receive the same—"but the grace and the truth was by Jesus Christ."

"No one"—i. e. no man—"hath seen God at any time;" for to see His face is described as the perfection of bliss in Heaven. "They shall see His face;" "We shall see Him as He is," says St. John. And perhaps, indeed, even to angels and saints in Heaven it is Christ alone Who reveals the Father, according as each is capable of receiving Him. However that may be, of those that are compassed with the flesh it is said, "Thou canst not see My face; for there shall no man see Me and live⁶." For although, indeed, it is said that Moses talked with God as friend with friend, yet this was but through sensible signs and by the creature. "Moses saw the cloud," says St. Augustin⁶, "saw the Angel, saw the fire; all this is the creature; it bore the type of its Lord; it exhibited not the presence of the Lord Himself." "*The only-begotten Son, Which is in the bosom of the Father*,"—i. e. as Augustin says, "in the secret of the Father;" in that bosom in which He is and ceases not to be, though on earth. "*He hath declared Him*." They of old "received the Law by the disposition of angels⁷," but to us of these last days, "He hath spoken by His Son⁸."

SECTION II

THE VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS

THUS does St. John commence his Gospel, as also his Epistle, with the pre-existence from everlasting and the

⁵ Exod. xxxiii. 20.

⁷ Acts vii. 53.

⁶ In Joan. Tr. iii. 17.

⁸ Heb. i. 2.

eternal generation of the Word; and thence descends to the Word made Flesh and dwelling among us, and to His Divinely-commissioned harbinger and witness, the Baptist. As St. Luke commences with the birth, St. Mark does with the teaching of this the Divine herald. *"The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; as it is written in the Prophets, Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face"* (Mark). There seems something very great and important in this preparation of John the Baptist: the termination of the Old Testament points to this; in this the New commences by a general consent of the four Evangelists; this the Jews and the Scribes themselves expressed as the essential preliminary—"the Scribes say that Elias must first come:" this is the testimony to which our Lord Himself so solemnly appeals, applying to him this verse from Malachi, in the very same words with which it is here quoted, "before Thy face," and "before Thee." It may be observed, that in the Prophet it is "before Me," and the change in the expression indicates that He Who sends the messenger, and He before Whom he is sent, is One with the Father, and with the Spirit Which spake by the Prophets; for it is evident that "before Thee" and "before Me" are spoken of One and the Same Person.

St. Luke not only records particularly the circumstance of St. John's birth, but when he comes to speak of his preaching at the full period of his ministry, he does it with a formal introduction, as of an eventful crisis, the most important in the world; and indeed it seems as if the two former chapters were but preliminary, and that this might be taken as the commencement of his Gospel. It was *"in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea,"* after the

deposition of Herod Archelaus; "*and Herod*" Antipas "*being tetrarch of Galilee; and Philip his brother tetrarch of Ituræa and the country of Trachonitis; and Lysanias being tetrarch of Abilene; Annas and Caiaphas being High Priests.*" The Prophets of old had commenced their books with the names of Jewish kings; but St. Luke's Gospel being addressed, not to the children of Israel alone, but to all the world, the rulers of both are included; and the Priesthood also, as the character of this Gospel is sacerdotal. "In the word of prophecy, spoken to the Jews alone," says Origen, "the Jewish kingdom only is mentioned, as the vision of Esaias, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. But in the Gospel, which was to be proclaimed to the whole world, there is mentioned the empire of Tiberius Cæsar, who appeared to be the master of the world." The two names occurring as High Priests is common with Josephus; and we have an instance long before in Zadoc and Abiathar, so frequently mentioned in the time of David: whether in this case one of these had held the office under the Romans, and had been deposed, as Zadoc was raised by Saul when Abiathar fled to David; or whether one was in some respect a ruler, as Zorobabel combined with Joshua, seems uncertain.

It was at this period that, "*the word of God came unto John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness.*" (Luke.) In the wilderness where he had been brought up, "until his showing forth unto Israel; in that mountainous country, listening for the still small voice of God, as Elijah had in the wilderness and Mount Horeb of old; and here disciplined and prepared from a child for thirty years, under the guidance of that Holy Spirit, Who was training him for his great mission; for not in the populous

Jerusalem, but here in the solitude of the mountains, God pleads with His people. The word of the Lord came to him there, as to the Prophet Micah, when he exclaims, "Hear ye now what the Lord saith; Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth; for the Lord hath a controversy with His people, and He will plead with Israel." Thus does St. Luke record that Divine mission from above, which the Baptist himself afterwards alludes to in St. John's Gospel. "He That sent me to baptize with water, the Same said unto me." Intimating thereby Divine communications.

"*In those days cometh John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea*" (Matt.), and as St. Mark says, "*John was baptizing in the wilderness.*" But we may suppose it was rather on the outskirts of the wilderness, in which he had hitherto dwelt, that he now came forth to baptize and preach; as St. Chrysostom says, like an angel from Heaven, coming down into their cities, as a wrestler into the contest, long trained to holiness: for St. Luke, after mentioning the call of God coming to him in the wilderness, seems to intimate his going forth to the borders; for he proceeds, "*and he came into all the country round about Jordan*" (Luke), "*preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins*" (Mark, Luke), "*and saying, Repent ye, for the kingdom of Heaven hath come near.*" (Matt.)

It is not the forgiveness of sins that he preached, for that Christ only could bestow, but repentance to prepare for that forgiveness. "John verily," says St. Paul, "preached a baptism of repentance;" he says not, observes Chrysostom, of remission, but of repentance; but

it is for remission, inasmuch as it is in order, "that they should believe on Him that should come after Him." His preaching was of repentance, and his baptism was the baptism of repentance. He came under the Law to those who were brought up under the Law, and to the fulfilment of the Law he called them; for he who will do the will of God, as expressed by the Law, shall know of the doctrine of Christ. It was therefore of Moses that our Lord said, "if ye believe not his writings, how can ye believe My words?" Thus St. Andrew, St. John, St. Peter, Nathanael, and St. Paul, were evidently righteous according to the Law, when they found Christ. The Scribe who perceived that the love of God and of man was the keeping of the commandments, was not far from the kingdom. To another our Lord said, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments," i. e. as given by Moses. For the Law was the schoolmaster to bring them unto Christ. Moreover, as coming to those who were under the Law, the teaching of John, like that of the Prophets and all the school of the Law, is as much by action as by word, his baptizing of itself preached more powerfully than language. They were accustomed to ablutions and washings, in daily life, before Divine services, after legal pollutions and leprosies; and to require baptism as the initiation of Heathens into their covenant, whereby they were made to forget their former country, and kindred, and name. This Baptism, therefore, proclaimed the need of entire washing for the children of Abraham, which they required of the Gentile, before they came to appear in the Presence of Christ and God. And the preaching of repentance at the same time, spoke of what was needful before that forgiveness of sins which it intimated, but which, being of the Law, it had no power

to bestow. For as the sacrifices of the Law indicated an expiation, which they could not afford ; so were all its rites external signs, but not means of conferring what they signified. Such was the Baptism of John. "St. John himself," says St. Ambrose, "is considered a type of the Law ; inasmuch as the Law could denounce sin, but could not pardon it." But St. Cyril of Jerusalem and some others speak of John's Baptism, as if remission of sins was obtained by it ; but not the gift of grace.

St. Matthew, in speaking of St. John the Baptist's teaching, adds, "*for this is he that is spoken of by Esaias the Prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness ;*" which seems to intimate that the holy Baptist did bear this testimony of himself, for it occurs in continuation of his own words, "repent ye, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand, for this is he." And we afterwards find it stated in St. John's Gospel, that the Baptist does appeal to this testimony of the Prophet, in answer to an embassy from Jerusalem. The other two Evangelists only mention that this was the fulfilment of that prophecy ; "*as it is written in the prophets, Behold I send My messenger before Thy face, who shall prepare Thy way before Thee*" (Mark), or with a more particular designation, "*as it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the Prophet, saying*" (Luke). And here all three Evangelists together concur in declaring the fulfilment of the prophecy, taking it up as it were in one solemn chant,—"*the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight*" (Matt., Mark, Luke). He is the voice—that emanation which hath no existence of itself but with reference to him that sends it forth, it is the voice sent forth from God for the manifestation of "the Word." The voice of itself may be inarticulate, it declares nothing without the word

that follows ; and the embassy of John is nothing without Christ. He is the voice, because the dispensation of the Baptist was peculiar in this, that "John worked no miracles ;" and in this respect contrasted with that of our Lord Himself, Who to the disciples of John appealed to His works ; and those works performed among the cities of men. He therefore was the voice, and the voice in the wilderness ; a heavenly voice amidst the desolations of humanity ; "as showing," says Gregory, "to deserted and forlorn Judea the coming of her Redeemer." And it was the voice "of one crying," as if he cried aloud ; thus St. John says of him, "John cried, saying, This is He of whom I spake." And it was a "voice crying in the wilderness," not "a still small voice," as to Elijah ; nor like Him of whom it is said, "He shall not cry, nor lift up His voice ;" but the loud and stern call to repentance, such as should be heard from the austere Preacher, above the waters and winds of the mountains. "Cry aloud ; spare not : lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins." And the very subject of his cry is as the loud proclamation of a Royal herald, of preparing and making straight the way as for a Royal Conqueror. "*Every valley shall be filled*" (Luke), to form the princely highway, "*and every mountain and hill shall be made low.*" "Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord !" "Thou shalt thresh the mountains and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff." And as in that beautiful description of the Coming of God with His chosen. "They shall not hunger nor thirst . . . For He that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall He guide them. And I will make all My mountains a way, and My highways shall be exalted."

The same is expressed less figuratively in the words of the blessed Virgin; "He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble and meek." And the types of this soon appear, when the proud Pharisees are rejected, and the lowly Publicans press into the kingdom: from that discipline of the Gospel which consists in "casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." "*And the crooked shall be made straight.*" All who come to Christ, come with restitution and reparation; in Him all ambiguities are made plain; all difficulties to salvation done away; crookedness of human will rectified. "*And the rough ways smooth,*" "when fierce and savage dispositions," says Gregory, "by the influence of Divine grace return to gentleness and meekness."

Thus only can the hearts of men be prepared, so that they may acknowledge the Messiah when He comes; and so far as their eyes are thus cleansed by repentance, shall they see God in His Incarnation. "*And all flesh shall see the salvation of God*" (Luke). The words "all flesh" seem to indicate, as St. Chrysostom observes, the calling of the Gentiles. "No longer Jews and Proselytes only," he says, "but also all earth and sea, and the whole race of men." The words may likewise be spoken of that mysterious coming of Elias before Christ's second Advent; when all flesh shall indeed see the salvation of God, after the preparation of the great forerunner, or those messengers who may be designated by his name. For "every eye shall see Him." "I in my flesh shall see God," says Job, "and mine eyes shall behold Him"—the salvation of God.

And if the place of the holy Baptist's teaching was so

in harmony with the subject of it, no less so was his appearance and manner of life: in both alike did he indicate the hidden Elias. "*And John (himself,*" Matt.) "*was clothed with*" (Mark), "*had his clothing of*" (Matt.), "*camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins*" (Matt., Mark). "What manner of man" (said the king) "was he which came up to meet you, and told you these words? And they answered him, He was an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins. And he said, It is Elijah the Tishbite⁹." And to Isaiah we read as if spoken of his usual apparel, "Go and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins¹⁰." And in speaking of the Messiah's kingdom, Zechariah says¹¹, that they shall no more "wear a rough garment," or "a garment of hair" "to deceive." For so much were such the received habiliments of prophets, that false prophets assumed the same; as false prophets among Christians shall come "in sheep's clothing," and in the gentleness of the Lamb of God. And what was this but carrying on, through the Law, the appointment of God made to our first parents, expressive indeed of desolation and death, yet combining with mortification a better hope, when on their exile from Paradise "the Lord God made them coats of skins, and covered them?" But it is not merely with the skins of beasts, but with the clothing of that foreign animal, which indicated his coming in strange apparel, as from afar; not of the tame and domestic animal, nurtured among the home habitations of the Jews: it was from a creature like himself, strange and foreign, the child of the desert, patient to bear, yet swift to execute, and long-enduring: and which scents afar off the waters of the desert; such is he whose preaching is of mortification and perseverance, and to go forth unto the

⁹ 2 Kings i. 8.¹⁰ Chap. xx. 2.¹¹ Chap. xiii. 4.

ends of the world. And what does the leathern girdle signify but, as St. Hilary says, an apparelling efficacious for every good work ; that we should be in will girded for every service of Christ? Or to intimate, as St. Ambrose says, that the flesh is no longer to be an incumbrance and weigh down the mind, but to be the girdle of our loins in Christ : that we have no further confidence in the flesh ; but hang our harps, as the Psalmist says, on the willows¹. It is sufficient to observe with St. Hilary, that the place, the preaching, the food, are in John worthy of notice ; while at the same time we remember that the verity of such transactions is not impaired, although in the performance of them an interior sense is laid up : matter found therein both for example and for meditation².

"And his food was" (Matt.), *"and he did eat"* (Mark) *"locusts and wild honey"* (Matt. Mark), the locusts of which there is express mention in the Law, "the locust after his kind, and the bald locusts thou mayest eat³." And the honey of which it is said, "with honey out of the stony rock have I satisfied thee." His clothing and food were nothing but that which God had provided as all that was needful for his wants ; as teaching in the wilderness and living on what the wilderness freely yielded. But as one bearing the true circumcision of the heart, and inwardly a Jew, he looked to the better things they signified, the sacrificial clothing which God would provide for the soul ; the commandments of God which were sweeter than honey to his mouth : for, in some sense, he might say with his blessed Master, that his "meat was to do the will of Him that sent him, and to finish His work⁴." And the locusts, the false prophets and destroyers⁵, the

¹ In Lucam, lib. ii. 9.

² In Matt. cap. ii. 2.

³ Lev. xi. 22.

⁴ John iv. 34.

⁵ Rev. ix. 3.

instruments of God's punishment, shall be with the honey, combined for the nutriment of the great Prophet; the locusts of God's wrath for the Law disobeyed; the honey of His love for the Gospel of forgiveness: repentance and remission of sins are combined in his teaching: the Law that killeth with the Gospel which giveth life. The desert yields honey; the wilderness and solitary place are glad, and the desert blossoms as the rose: instead of the brier comes up the myrtle tree; out of the strong came forth sweetness; from the lion of Judah, now in some sense expiring, comes forth the Gospel. The friend of the Bridegroom, and preparing himself and others to hear His voice, he spends his time in fastings and prayers; with loins girded, and like unto men that wait for their Lord.

"*And*" (Mark) "*then*" (Matt.) "*went out to him,*"—for he required them to come to him, and not that he should go to them,—"*Jerusalem*" (Matt.) "*they of Jerusalem*" (Mark) "*and all*" (*the land of*, Mark) "*Judea*" (Matt. Mark), "*and all the country round about Jordan*" (Matt.), "*and were*" (*all*, Mark) "*baptized of him in*" (*the river*, Mark) "*Jordan, confessing their sins*" (Matt. Mark). Such was, even now, the beginning of the fulfilment of the prophecy of Jeremiah, of the return of Israel from the captivity of sin, "they shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble; for I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My first-born"⁶

⁶ Jer. xxxi. 9.

SECTION III

THE TEACHING OF THE BAPTIST

It appears, therefore, that all the teaching of the Baptist is contained in the word "repentance," and that it was accompanied with "confession of sins;" such was the great preparation of mankind that they might see in Christ the salvation of God. This leads us to inquire what was the nature of that repentance which he taught. As he himself lived in a manner different from others, dwelling in the solitudes alone with God, it might have been expected that he would call upon others to adopt the same retirement and external renunciation of the world. As he required them to be baptized, in order to find entrance into the vestibule of the new covenant, as they had required Heathens, in order to enter into theirs, so it might have been supposed that he would call upon them, as Isaiah did on his countrymen while living among the Babylonians, "depart from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you⁷." But this was far from being the case, for although his more immediate disciples appear to have adopted his austerities, even while living among men; yet his teaching of the people in general consisted in nothing more than in calling on each to amend his daily life, in those points in which it was most open to temptation. First of all are seen the Pharisees and Sadducees, whose characters are afterwards so pre-eminently and so fearfully shown; they come to him with more apparent

⁷ Isa. lii. 11; 2 Cor. vi. 17.

respect and deference than they afterwards show to our Blessed Lord, on account, probably, of his high Priestly descent, and the great reverence in which he was held by the people, as one of austere life, and a Prophet. The awful words, by which they were addressed by the Baptist, might appear from St. Luke to have been also spoken to the Jews generally; but we find St. Luke does sometimes drop the particular designation in a more general term, (as that of Herodians in those "who should feign themselves just men;") and it would appear from both, that there were Pharisees and Sadducees, who came in great numbers. "*He said therefore to the multitudes who went forth to be baptized of him*" (Luke), "*and when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his Baptism, he said unto them*" (Matt.), "*O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?*" (Matt. Luke.) All is now at once new and quite different from the Prophets of old, for it is not of a land flowing with milk and honey, nor of Babylon; nor as with Elias of kings to be cut off, and drougt and famine; but of Heaven and of Hell; "the kingdom of Heaven is at hand," "the fire unquenchable," and "the wrath to come." For although the wrath to come here spoken of may have some primary allusion to the destruction of Jerusalem, yet it seems to mean no less than that of which our Lord warns them, "the damnation of Hell." And this very appellation, "ye generation of vipers," is more than once applied to them by Christ Himself, speaking also of their resemblance to their fathers, "ye serpents, ye generation of vipers;" whereas St. Ambrose seems to think the term here spoken to their commendation as differing from their fathers: but it clearly appears not. Indeed, our Lord seems to supply the

meaning of the term in a denunciation still more terrible, "ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do," children of that old serpent. Children were they also of those their fathers who killed the Prophets, as Christ Himself testified of them; children of those whom the Psalmist describes as having "the poison of asps under their lips;" yea, and they are "like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ears: which refuseth to hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely:" they will hear it not, notwithstanding all these appearances of their coming to the voice of wisdom. And the holy Baptist seems to express surprise at their coming, "Who hath warned you?" as if he thought, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then shall ye who do evil learn to do well⁸;" and, "Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians?" says Amos⁹. Nor is John deceived by their unstable appearances of good, and that dissimulation which marked their characters, for he adds, "*Bring forth, therefore, fruits worthy of repentance*" (Matt. Luke). The test ever given of the heart is, "By their fruits ye shall know them," "Every tree is known by its fruit;" to this, therefore, he now appeals; and three years after our Lord came, seeking fruit, and found none. And the Baptist immediately proceeds to the root of all the evil, their calculating so much on the external privileges of their race; for it appears throughout the Gospels, and from all the teaching of St. Paul, that this was their great stumbling-block. "*And begin not*" (Luke) or "*and think not*" (Matt.) "*to say in yourselves, we have Abraham for our father; for I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham*" (Matt. Luke). Nothing more easy than to raise up

⁸ Jer. xiii. 23. °

⁹ Chap. ix. 7.

children to Abraham ; nothing more difficult than to raise up children to Christ. "Look unto the rock from whence ye are hewn, and unto the hole of the pit from whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you. For I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him¹⁰." But who are ye? barren and unfruitful as the stones, on which the dew of Heaven falls in vain, and the sun shines. Ye are indeed children of Abraham after the flesh, but what of that? Ye yourselves are raised of stones in the wilderness ; of those stony-hearted Jews of old who hardened their hearts in the desert, though Abraham's seed. Or it might be interpreted thus, Abraham shall not want children, though you be cut off ; the stony hearts of the Gentiles shall be softened by the piercing influence of His grace. He Who could quicken Sarah's womb and Abraham when old, can supply him with truer sons than you. Thus St. Hilary and St. Ambrose apply the expression to those Gentiles who are to be called the true children of Abraham, and consider it an allusion to the building of the rising Church, which is constructed not of rocky crags, but of living stones, for an habitation of God. For God was preparing to soften the hardness of our minds, and out of stones of offence to raise up religious worshippers.

"And now also is the axe laid to the root of the trees ; every tree, therefore, that bringeth not forth good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire" (Matt. Luke). Thus does the Evangelical forerunner speak with more awful severity and sternness than all the Prophets had done before, of the axe at the root, and of being cast into the fire ; for the higher the privilege is, the more imminent the danger ; and it is not to the Jewish nation only as a body that he

¹⁰ Isa. li. 1, 2.

speaks, as the Prophets had usually done, but to all the trees that are therein, to each individual separately, to "every tree." But first is it fulfilled, and more palpably, in the Jewish nation itself, as the type, for the axe is at the root of the Jewish nation; and now the Intercessor pleads for it and carefully tends it for three years, but He finds no fruit at the end; and for forty years afterwards did His Holy Spirit plead with it, but still He found no fruit. "I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and behold, a Watcher and an Holy One came down from Heaven. He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit, nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth¹¹." And now the same is said to the Christian Church also, which has been grafted upon that destruction; "the axe is laid at the root;" "If some of the branches be broken off, and thou wert grafted in among them, boast not against the branches; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear¹."

Such, therefore, was the plainness and severity of his teaching of the well-instructed but hard-hearted Pharisees; speaking by the same Spirit which had appealed to them by the Prophets as "rulers of Sodom," and "people of Gomorrah²;" by the sublime appeals of Isaiah, and the tears of Jeremiah; and afterwards with the warnings and tears of Christ; by the stern rebukes of St. Stephen, and the earnest expostulations of St. Paul. And now they "are willing for a season to rejoice in his light;" they sent to him, "Ye sent unto John;" they came to his baptism, but they "rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him³;" he came "in the way of

¹¹ Dan. iv. 14.

¹ Rom. xi. 20.

² Isa. i. 10.

³ Luke vii. 30.

righteousness, but they believed him not⁴." It would seem as if the holy Baptist in surprise saw them coming unto his baptism, and instead of encouraging, met them with searching and austere reproof, demanding the fruits of repentance, and not the claim of being Abraham's children. For he saw them coming unto his baptism, St. Matthew says, but, says our Lord in St. Luke, they were "not baptized of him." Or it may be that our Lord speaks of the Pharisees generally, whereas some of them did now come to the baptism of John. Origen thinks that they were not baptized of him, but rejected by those words, "O generation of vipers . . ." while he received those who came confessing their sins⁵. St. Chrysostom thinks that these were baptized: "From all these things," he says, "it is manifest that they came indeed and were baptized, yet they did not abide in the belief of that which was preached." He supposes that all their conduct was hypocritical; and when they sent unto him demanding if he were the Christ, when it is said "they who were sent were of the Pharisees," he thinks that even this was only as a snare, and with an evil intent. And so Origen also. We may observe that it is hypocrisy especially that Christ lays to their charge, and to him they come with simulations of good. Probably, as in other cases, they are deceivers rather of themselves than of others. Men of religious profession if bad are worse than others—more hardened, impenitent, irreclaimable.

But not so the multitude; for they were struck with the piercing severity and majesty of his call, both his general summons to repentance, and his warning declaration to the Pharisees, "of righteousness and temperance and of judgment to come;" and with the instinctive im-

⁴ Matt. xxi. 32.

⁵ Hom. in Luc. xxiv.

pulse of an awakened conscience they come individually and severally to ask what points in their conduct he would have them to amend, with sincere intentions of doing accordingly: as they who, pricked in heart, said to St. Peter and the rest of the Apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"—as the awakened gaoler to Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" or as St. Paul himself, trembling and astonished, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" or with Samuel, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

"And the multitude asked him, saying, What therefore shall we do? He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise" (Luke). Here again was the axe laid to the root of the tree, for "the root of all evil" is covetousness; here is the new law, "bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ;" for by obeying this law ye will learn to believe in Him, when ye see Him; here is the first precept of Evangelical charity, "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," on which, together with the other golden rule, hang all the Law and the Prophets; for he that loveth his neighbour as himself, will impart to him what he hath. And the greatness of that mercy which is here placed as the first, is intimated, though in a manner more latent, in the Law, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." It approaches, it may be observed, to the injunction given to the Apostles, "Take not two coats apiece:" yet most needful for every penitent, for "charity shall cover the multitude of sins;" "give alms of what ye have, and lo, all things are clean unto you." And therefore such were the first-fruits of righteousness in the Church, when "not any of them said that ought of the things he possessed was his own, but

they had all things common." And these are the first-fruits in Heaven also, as our Lord declares in the words of the Judge, "I was hungry and ye gave Me meat ; naked, and ye clothed Me ;" "forasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." Food and raiment are put as the bounds of our legitimate desires, "having food and raiment, let us be therewith content:" and the prayer each day for "daily bread," is the extent of desire expressed for things temporal. St. Jerome applies the words of St. Paul as the best commentary on this passage, "I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened ; but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance may also be a supply for your want ; that there may be equality." It may further be observed that all these commands of the holy Baptist have a reference to the second Table, as all the commandments which our Lord set before the Rich young man, and specified, were from this second Table, when He had first stated, "if thou wouldst enter into life, keep the commandments." This is very observable.

"And there came also publicans to be baptized, and they said unto him, Master, what shall we do ? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you." Now this appears a less strict command than the former ; for the former was as it were a "counsel of perfection," to give away all but that which was actually needful ; a part of that charity that "seeketh not her own ;" but this is to abstain from acts of injustice. And here appears the gentleness of this Divine Prophet, in contrast with the Pharisees : they bound heavy burdens and grievous to be borne on men's shoulders, but they themselves would not touch them with one of their fingers. He

taught nothing but where he had himself done more than he required others to do. He bore himself the burden of mortification, and had more than fulfilled the higher command that he gave, for he had not for himself either coat or food ; but he laid not this burden on others, nor poured the new wine of Evangelical charity into the old bottles of the natural man. Of poor publicans immersed in ignorance all he required was, that they should cease to do evil ; that so ceasing to do evil they might learn to do well : from doing wrong to no man might be led on, like the good publican Zaccheus, to restore fourfold on seeing Christ, and bestow half of their goods to feed the poor : or even with the Evangelist St. Matthew, to leave all, and to follow Christ.

“ *And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do ? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely ; and be content with your wages* ” (Luke). Here also the repentance is apparently easy, and light the request, from one whose own life was so austere ; even among the soldiers therefore of this world, the soldiers of the Cross may be found ; and thus afterwards of the good Centurion our Lord Himself testifies that He had not found such great faith, no, not in Israel, and yet reproved not his occupation : and the prayers and alms of the Centurion Cornelius arose as a memorial before God. These were soldiers, and living among soldiers. Even this state may be a school of virtue, and lay the foundation of faith in discipline and hardship and obedience. This was the preparation of each, abiding in the state wherein he is called, laying aside that sin which doth most easily beset him, and thus in repentance waiting for God ; whose kingdom cometh not by observation, but is within the heart. These are given as specimens

of the teaching of the Holy Baptist, and of the nature of that repentance which he taught, as directed to the life and circumstances of each whom he addressed, when they came "confessing their sins;" to which St. Luke subsequently adds, "*And many other things in his exhortation he preached to the people.*"

SECTION IV

THE APPROACH OF CHRIST FORETOLD

SUCH was the awful sanctity, and such the teaching of the great Forerunner; touching the consciences of all with a sense of great alarm, like the voice of approaching Judgment heard in the wilderness of the human heart; but nothing had he yet disclosed concerning himself, and nothing had he yet distinctly said of Christ. The same awful suspense also hangs for a long time over the Person of Christ Himself during His ministry, so that some could say that He was Elias, and some John the Baptist risen from the grave. Nor does the holy Baptist acknowledge himself to gratify their curiosity, but in order to decline the too exalted estimation which they had conceived of him; knowing, as Origen observes, that undue admiration of persons is detrimental to those who entertain the same, and to those who are the objects of it; and the chief cause of heresies. But he speaks of himself for the same reason that St. Paul gave for his forbearing to do so, "lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or heareth of me." For this lowliness of mind is the universal characteristic of every Saint. The reason of this high

estimation they entertained of him, was perhaps partly owing to the austerity of his life and majesty of his preaching, as one inspired; but especially from his baptizing, as appears from the mention of it in St. John by the Pharisees, and from his own immediate introduction of that subject here. *"And as the people were in expectation, and all men were musing in their hearts concerning John, whether he were the Christ or not, John answered them all and said"* (Luke), or as St. Mark introduces it, *"He preached, saying"* (Mark). This expression, of his saying in his preaching, and that of St. Luke, of the people doubting in their hearts concerning him, indicates that this occasion of the holy Baptist's announcement is not the same as that declaration made in answer to the Pharisees sent from Jerusalem, which St. John afterwards records; and which appears to have been after our Lord's Baptism, from its connexion with other events. But now it is in answer to the unexpressed thoughts of the people, that he says, *"I indeed baptize"* (*have baptized*, Mark) *"you with water"* (Matt., Mark, Luke) *"unto repentance"* (Matt.), "for his baptism was especially that of repentance, not of remission," says Chrysostom, "not of grace," says St. Ambrose, "as that of Christ." *"But there cometh One mightier than I"* (Mark, Luke) *"after me"* (Mark), or *"but He that cometh after me is mightier than I"* (Matt.), *"for Whom I am not worthy"* (Matt., Mark, Luke) *"to stoop down"* (Mark) *"and loose the latchet"* (Mark, Luke), and *"to bear"* (Matt.) *"His shoes"* (Matt., Mark, Luke). Some would observe mystical and latent meanings contained in the form of expression of "loosing the latchet" and "bearing the shoes," but the mind passes from the language itself to the living picture of lowliness pre

sented by it, and the infinite difference between that Prophet who was the greatest of them that are born of women, and the Son Himself; as one not only unworthy to be His servant, but even the very meanest of His servants: intimating, it may be, what our Lord Himself afterwards said, that "the least in the kingdom of Heaven is greater than he"—even as Elisha was greater than Elijah, and as a double portion of the Spirit shall rest on those who behold the coming of the Comforter. He therefore, who administers this Baptism of repentance, is meaner than the meanest of those who shall receive the Baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire. But still He Who is infinitely greater, surpasses the inferior in nothing more than His infinite lowliness: for He Himself unties the latchet, and bears the shoes, and washes the feet of His own servants, girding Himself as a slave; for as His majesty is, so is His mercy. And the infinite difference which exists between this harbinger and the Messiah Himself, is expressed by the infinite difference which exists between the Baptisms of the two; of which one is as much above the other as Heaven is above earth; as a living power above its external symbol; as the regeneration of the soul, and the fiery laver of the Spirit of God, is above that washing of the body, which is lifeless but significative. "*He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire*" (Matt., Mark, Luke). "Having set forth," says St. Chrysostom, "the little value of his own Baptism, and shown that it had nothing more than to lead men to repentance, he sets forth Christ's, which is full of the Unspeakable Gift*." A Baptism by water indeed, but also with the Holy Ghost and with fire. A Baptism, not like the external rites of

* Hom. in Matt. ad loc.

the Law, but life-giving, powerful, terrible. Here Christ Himself is said to baptize; and in St. John's Gospel we read, "when the Pharisees had heard that Jesus baptized more disciples than John," and although he adds the explanation, "yet Jesus Himself baptized not, but His disciples," yet much is contained in the expression, for it intimates that in all true Christian Baptism it is Christ baptizing; and therefore Baptism is rightly understood to be the work of the Bishop in the Church, when performed by his deputy the Priest or Deacon in his name, or by his consent. One in many is the character of the Church visible, representing Christ in His servants baptizing, and conferring with all reverence and order the Gift Unspeakable. But as the Baptism of John is put for the whole dispensation of John's ministry, it may be that the Baptism of Christ is here intended to signify His Gospel and kingdom, where He baptizes throughout with His holy influences and fiery probation. Thus in the Apocalypse, "a sea of glass mingled with fire¹." "Indicating," says Chrysostom, "by the metaphor of baptizing with the Holy Ghost the abundance of the grace; and by fire, the vehement and uncontrollable power of that grace." But the word fire, as it is variously explained by different writers, and even at different times by the same writer, so it may signify manifold manifestations of the Spirit in the various modes of which fire is descriptive. As in old time the manifestations of God to His people were by fire, so is it now with the trials of His Saints; that mighty power of the Spirit accompanying His Baptism is seen in manifold developments and qualities of which fire is the emblem. As the flaming Bush in which God spake

¹ Rev. xv. 2.

to Moses: as the Pillar of fire by night by which He led them through the waters of the sea and the wilderness: as the fire of Mount Sinai in which God talked with them: and as He appeared to Ezekiel on the Cherubims: and as He was seen to envelope His own people with fire. With regard to some it may be spoken of the fire of persecution, as "think it not strange concerning the fiery trial that shall try you, but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings." Christ Himself speaks of His own sorrows as a Baptism of suffering. In other cases, it may signify quickening and enlightening, as the tongues on the day of Pentecost seem to denote: so that as all nature is warmed by the sun, so shall He enliven and invigorate all things in His spiritual kingdom. Thus of His Saints it is said, "as gold in the furnace hath He tried them, and received them as a burnt-offering⁸:" and of Himself in His kingdom, that "He is like a refiner's fire," and that "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver." And as He Himself says of His Gospel, "I am come to send fire on the earth: and what will I, if it be already kindled⁹?" But even here also, this expression of baptizing with fire may have some reference to another expression of the Baptist's which follows it, of the "fire unquenchable:"—for the Gospel is not only a savour of life, but also unto death. "Our God is a consuming fire." "With the breath of His mouth shall He slay the wicked." And of Tophet, "ordained of old," it is said, "that the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it¹⁰." Such is the case with natural fire itself, the visible emblem it may be of what here is signified: for fire gives life and destroys; the sun that quickens

⁸ Wisd. iii. 6.⁹ Luke xii. 49.¹⁰ Isa. xxx. 33.

the living branch, withers and dries up that which is parted from the stock of the tree. The fire that harmed not the Three Children slew the servants of Nebuchadnezzar. The pillar of fire which saved the Israelites, was death to the Egyptians. Christ Himself is "set for the fall and rising again of many." "If thou shouldst be holy," says Origen, "thou shalt be baptized with the Holy Ghost: if a sinner, thou shalt be immersed into fire: and one and the same Baptism to the unworthy and to sinners shall be turned into condemnation and fire: but to those who are holy, and with entire faith are converted unto the Lord, the grace and salvation of the Spirit will be vouchsafed. Therefore He that thus baptizeth hath 'the fan in His hand.'" Here Origen goes on to connect it with the expression of the "unquenchable fire." But again, fire is spoken of as that which shall hereafter try the works of us all, "fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." "Every sacrifice shall be salted with fire." And therefore some would explain it as a purgatorial fire for all our works: as if the first regeneration were by the Baptism of water, and the second regeneration were by the Baptism of fire. Thus Origen says, "that he who has been before baptized with water and the Spirit shall be baptized hereafter with fire also." "That as St. John now stands by the river Jordan, baptizing those who are admitted into the kingdom, and rejecting others, so the Lord Jesus shall stand in the fiery stream of the flaming whirlpool, that whosoever on his departure from this life needs purgation, and desires to pass into Paradise, He baptizes him with this stream, and sends him to the object of his desires; but those who have no sign of their former Baptism, He baptizes not with fire." Words, which if poetically applied in figure

to the troubles of this world, might with force and beauty describe the trials and chastenings endured by Christ's elect, partaking of His Baptism, and our souls bathed all over with the fiery baptism of His Spirit; by which all that is earthly must be dead and burnt up in us, and afford fuel to the Spirit that cleanseth; by which we are walking as the Three Children with Christ in the fiery furnace of this our spiritual probation, which Christ hath sent forth, according to His own expression, "as a fire" upon earth. But St. Hilary also applies it in like manner to a purgatorial fire of the Judgment. "He designates," says he, "the time of our salvation and of our judgment in the Lord; for it remains for them who are baptized by the Holy Ghost, to be perfected by the fire of the Judgment¹."

"Whose fan is in His hand; and He will thoroughly clear out His threshing-floor, and will gather" (Matt. Luke) "*His wheat into the barn*" (Matt.), "*the wheat into His barn*" (Luke); "*but the chaff He will burn with fire unquenchable*" (Matt. Luke). And now He is as "the Lord of the harvest," or "the husbandman" with His fan, after no human manner, but as in the sublime picture of the Prophet². "Thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff. Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them." "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence; there shall go before Him a consuming fire, and a mighty tempest shall be stirred up round about Him." Thus with Christ's first coming is His second coming spoken of in immediate connexion, as if both were in a manner but one and the same. And here the herald speaks of the

¹ Com. in Matt. ii. 4.

² Isa. xli. 15.

first advent in terms that describe the second: He is spoken of as baptizing with the Holy Ghost, and immediately afterwards as the Judge; as the Prophet Malachi had done before, "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in. But who may abide the day of His coming?" And no doubt that which is more closely fulfilled in the second Coming has its fulfilment also throughout this dispensation, which is called "the days of the Son of Man." Already is He in His kingdom with His fan in His hand, purging His floor, and separating the wheat from the chaff, as tokens or rehearsals of the great and final separation. Already, even now, "one is taken, and another left;" in every department of life are these severings, and that for ever; by death, by disagreement, by change of life or of character, "in the field," "at the mill," "in bed," already are these partings off, never to be restored. And observe how closely the mention of the fire unquenchable comes after the baptizing "with the Holy Ghost and with fire;" a fire of which nature presents the daily token in the sun, which burns but is not consumed; and Holy Scripture in the bush that burned, but was not destroyed. And what is the winnowing and the wind, but His Holy Spirit doubtless, which "bloweth where it listeth," which came down as "the sound of a rushing mighty wind"? In the hour of temptation He cometh, and in the temptation the separation is made: then is the discernment as of St. Peter and the rest, "Satan hath desired to have you and to sift you as wheat." When the winds blow, then is the house known, whether it be built upon a rock or upon the sand: then the wheat sown by the Son of Man is parted from the chaff. The chaff, indeed, is often the figure of the wicked,

as expressive of external resemblance to the good, but deceitful and vain, and found wanting in the balance. In the Old Testament it is "as the chaff before the wind," scattered by the Angel of the Lord; "as the chaff which is driven by the whirlwind³;" "like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors, and the wind carried them away, and no place was found for them⁴:" but in the Gospel it is to be "burned with unquenchable fire," and of which it is said in Malachi, "all that do wickedly shall be stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up." And here it is to be observed that the Gospel of good tidings opens with terrors before unknown to the world, as the most awful of all dispensations: the axe at the root; hewing down; casting into the fire, the fire unquenchable. For it is on account of the mercy that is with God, says the Psalmist, that He is to be feared. Empty intentions, empty objects of pursuit, empty reputations, empty riches, empty appearances of good, these make the chaff, these are shaken off by the wind, and the good seed is found. "By this comparison," says St. Ambrose, "it is shown that the Lord on the day of Judgment shall distinguish the fruits and deservings of solid virtue from the unfruitful levity of empty boasting and of scanty deeds; about to place men of more perfect virtue in the heavenly mansion. For He is Himself the more perfect fruit, Who hath fallen as a grain of wheat, that He might bring forth in us much fruit: hating the chaff, and not friendly to empty merits; therefore before Him shall a fire burn⁵." And Gregory, "After the threshing is finished in this life, in which the grain now groans under the burden of the chaff, the fan of the last Judgment shall so separate between them, that neither shall any chaff pass into the granary, nor shall

³ Hos. xiii. 3.⁴ Dan. ii. 35.⁵ In Luc. ii. 82.

the grain fall into the fire which consumes the chaff⁶." To this we may add the words of Him Whose coming shall be "like a refiner's fire." "Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not⁷."

SECTION V

CHRIST IS BAPTIZED

BUT among the crowd which from all parts were flocking to John, there was One now appeared, the beholding of Whom made the great Master of Repentance to shrink himself, under the sense of his need of a higher washing than he himself could confer. For although, in the highest sense of all, as yet he knew Him not, yet in one sense he knew Him, for he had acknowledged Him in the womb; and since then and now he knew enough of His holiness to know that he was himself unworthy to approach Him, and stood abashed before Him. But on this subject there will be occasion to speak more at length hereafter, when we come to the declaration of the Baptist, that "he knew Him not." "*And it came to pass in those days, came Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee*" (Mark), or in the words of St. Matthew, "*then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.*" He came from Nazareth of Galilee, where He had hitherto been living unknown to the world, and where not even did His own brethren believe in Him, being now at the legal age⁸ for taking on Him His ministry. St. Luke

⁶ Mor. xxxiv. 5; ap. Aur. Cat. in Matt. ad loc.

⁷ Mal. iii. 18.

⁸ See Numb. iv. 3.

therefore adds to the account he had given of His baptism, "*And Jesus Himself began to be about thirty years of age.*" Having for thirty years fulfilled the Law in perfect obedience, He comes to Jordan, to pass over from legal to Evangelical righteousness. The very number of His years, as Bede observes, may contain in it mysterious wisdom; for thrice ten consists of the number of the Blessed Trinity and the Decalogue combined, and may therefore also serve to set forth Christian Baptism in the Name of the Trinity, and which through that Name gives the power of fulfilling obedience. "*But John forbade Him, saying, I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?*" (Matt.) It was in the Baptist a private expression of his own unworthiness; but it was also Divinely spoken, as by him who was the Preacher of Repentance, and represented the voice of the Law, in testimony of Christ as of One without sin, Who needed no washing, and had no evil to confess. "*And Jesus answered and said unto him, Suffer it to be so now;*"—"now," in the days of His humiliation—"now," while He had to fulfil the Law, and this one thing alone remained unfulfilled—"now," before He Himself shall baptize with the Holy Ghost, and be Himself baptized with a baptism of blood:—"suffer it to be so now, *for so it is meet for us to fulfil all righteousness.*" Having come to do away with the curse for the transgression of the Law⁹, and having now fulfilled all legal righteousness, He comes to this the last act of all, and thereby opens the Heavens and brings in the new dispensation, and the blessings for the fulfilment of the Law for those that are found in Him. For the Baptism of John was not exactly a washing of the Law, but something beyond, as having confession of sins

⁹ Deut. xxvii. 26.

and laying open in some measure thereby the secret spirit ; the secret spirit, into which the Gospel enters ; being the Baptism of one who was himself greater than all the Prophets of the Law. And though Christ was "without sin," yet, as "He bore the sins of many," He thus indicated that those sins of the many which He bore, would be washed away in Him : "That in Him," as Nazianzen says, "the old Adam might be buried, and the new man raised : that as bearing the sins of all, He needed washing, as He needed also for the same a baptism of sufferings." Or as St. Ambrose, St. Hilary, and St. Augustin suppose, "Not that He Himself needed washing, but that He might thereby hallow water to the washing away of our sins ; for as He sanctified our flesh by taking the same, so did He sanctify water by being washed thereby." He sanctified water, as the Baptismal Office of the Church expresses it, "to the mystical washing away of sin." For thus He gave water a power of cleansing the reins and the heart, which no washing of the Baptist could reach ; that "the rivers of the flood thereof might make glad the City of God." His being baptized, moreover, as St. Jerome observes, "gave His own Divine sanction to the Baptism of John : " "it was inculcating by His own example," says St. Ambrose, "what He required His disciples to do ; for fulfilling righteousness is doing that which we require of others." "Not that He required purgation," say the Apostolical Constitutions¹, "but to testify the truth of John's Baptism, and to afford us an example." "Consecrating thereby," says Augustin, "His own Sacrament." For thus did He bring down the Holy Spirit on our flesh and our Baptism, which He in His fulness needed not. And thus does our Lord's Baptism unite in itself the two

¹ L. vii. ch. 22.

dispensations ; as, in like manner, in the appointment of the other great Sacrament, which (St. Chrysostom has observed) was the Passover according to the Law converted into the Eucharistic feast of the Gospel ; so now the Baptism was that of John, of a Priestly family, and a Prophet of the Law according to legal righteousness ; but the opening Heavens and descending of the Spirit were of the new. "Acting with a view to both," says St. Chrysostom, "He brought the one to an end, but to the other He gave a beginning²." As He came not to destroy but to fulfil the Law, so with the external fulfilment did He combine the internal Spirit that sanctifies the same ; showing the spiritual manner in which both the ceremonial and the moral Law would be fulfilled by Him, and by those that are in Him.

St. John the Baptist, therefore, though at first reluctant, at this gracious appeal submits to wash Him ; in like manner, as St. Peter afterwards, though at first reluctant and declining, submits to be washed by Him, acquiescing in love and obedience to the mysterious command of their Lord, although it was to their own exaltation by His unspeakable humiliations. "*Then he suffers Him,*" adds St. Matthew, "*and He was baptized of John in Jordan*" (Mark), or rather into, i. e. by going into Jordan, as the expression signifies. The words in St. Luke afford a still more lively picture of this great scene of humiliation, "*And it came to pass when all the people were baptized :*" for thus do we behold Him, in a scene brought before our eyes, going down with that promiscuous crowd, as a man amongst men, as a sinner amongst sinners, Himself the Maker and the Judge of all : as "the Lamb of God" among the sheep of His pasture. "*And*

² Hom. in Matt. xii.

Jesus being baptized" (Matt. Luke), "*ascended straightway out of the water*" (Matt.), "*and straightway ascending out of the water*" (Mark): so mysterious, and as it were by immediate consequence, is the ascending of Christ and the descending of the Spirit connected. And St. Luke again adds a circumstance still more descriptive and expressive of the moment, "*and praying*:" a circumstance which he so emphatically records also at the Transfiguration, as of our great High Priest whom his Gospel describes. "*And behold*," as if instantly on His ascending, "*the Heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God*" (Matt.), or as St. Mark, "*He saw the Heavens cleaving asunder, and the Spirit descending*." St. Luke again adds to the descriptiveness, "It came to pass," "*that the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape*" (Luke), "*as it were a Dove*" (Matt. Mark, Luke), "*and coming*" (Matt.) "*upon Him*" (Matt. Mark, Luke). "*And behold*" (Matt.) "*there came*" (Mark, Luke), "*a Voice from Heaven*" (Matt. Mark, Luke), "*saying*," (Matt. Luke), "*This is*" (Matt.) "*Thou art*" (Mark, Luke) "*My Son, the Beloved, in Whom I am well pleased*" (Matt. Mark, Luke). The Beloved, or, as St. Athanasius and others explain it, the Only-begotten, the One and Only, as this word in Greek often signifies, an object cherished because one and the only one of a kind. It is so rendered in Genesis, where there are in the Greek precisely the same words spoken to Abraham, "*take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest*³:" as in Isaiah, "*Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth*⁴." There is, it may be observed, a discrepancy in the Evangelists, in the words recorded, for in St. Mark and St. Luke it is, "*Thou art My Son*," as if addressed to our Lord Himself;

³ λαβὲ τὸν υἱόν σου τὸν ἀγαπητόν. Chap. xxii. 2. ⁴ Isa. xlii. 1.

in St. Matthew, "This is My Son," as if addressed to others present. Perhaps St. Matthew gives the substance and meaning, and the others the exact expression; these words, however, in St. Matthew, are precisely the same as those at the Transfiguration, which appear to be addressed to the three disciples; here we know of no other witness but St. John the Baptist. It is indeed remarkable, that in St. Matthew and St. Mark, it is only stated of our Lord Himself that "*He saw*" the Heavens opened, and the Spirit descending: in St. Luke it is mentioned generally, that "the Heavens were opened and the Spirit descended." But in St. John's Gospel we afterwards have the Baptist bearing witness, that he himself "saw the Spirit descending like a dove." The holy Baptist, therefore, was privileged to see, for they who fulfil the Law shall see the Spirit abiding on Christ; but more especially it was our Blessed Saviour Himself Who saw the Heavens opened, as St. Matthew says;—Who saw the Spirit, as St. Mark says; for it is not only by Him, but to Him only, and to those that are found in Him, that the Heavens are opened: it is He only, and they who are in Him, who see the Spirit; for "the world seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him⁵." It was to Christ, as "the Son of Man," and combined with us in our human nature,—to us and His Church in Him,—that the Heavens were opened; not to Him merely as God and the Son of God, and as One with the Father in Heaven, from Whom the Spirit proceeded, but as God and Man in One Person. Yet it was not, says St. Augustin, that He was then anointed with the Holy Ghost, but that He deigned to prefigure His Body the Church; for even the Baptist was filled with the Spirit from his mother's womb; what,

⁵ John xiv. 17.

therefore, must we understand of Him, Whose very conception was by the Spirit⁶? It was His Church, therefore, that He represented. It is to the baptized that the Heavens are opened; it is the baptized who see the Spirit. And St. Chrysostom has a further thought even than this, as if it were not the baptized only, but those who are but newly baptized, who are here represented, saying, that thus "at the beginning of spiritual matters sensible visions are vouchsafed for their sakes, who can form no idea of things incorporeal, and are excited only by the things that are seen⁷." It is He, therefore, that saw the opening Heavens and descending Spirit; and as St. Luke adds, when "praying," when perhaps His eyes were lifted up to Heaven; which, as we read on another occasion, was the attitude of His prayers. It may be further observed, that on the three occasions, when there was a Voice from Heaven, it was on each in answer to His prayer, as if every gift coming from above were but in answer to the Son of Man. These ineffable manifestations indeed of the Ever-adorable and Blessed Trinity, in communion unspeakable with each other, took place, we may conclude, only for our sakes; as our Lord said on the last occasion, "This Voice came not because of Me, but for your sakes;" yet, as in this last instance, although spoken in the presence of many, it was only distinctly perceived by a few; so now also it may have been in the presence of many, but only distinctly manifested to the Baptist. In like manner, as when St. Stephen saw the Heavens opened, that revelation seems to have been vouchsafed to himself alone, and not to those who surrounded Him. Although, says St. Chrysostom, the descent of the Spirit like a Dove was sensibly visible, yet it does not follow that this was

⁶ De Trin. XV. cap. xxvii.

⁷ Hom. in Matt. xii. 3.

seen but by the Baptist and a few others ; for Zacharias saw many things in sensible vision, and so likewise did Daniel and Ezekiel. And Moses saw such as no one else hath seen. In like manner, at the Transfiguration, He was not seen by all the disciples ; and at the Resurrection only by a few "witnesses chosen of God⁸." So that it is probable that this manifestation also was, in a great measure, in secret, as in the other cases ; disclosed only to the Baptist, or a very few besides.

Then was fulfilled all that had been prefigured in Jordan, "What aileth thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest, and thou, Jordan, that thou wast driven back ? Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob." For the Salt and Dead sea, the abode of the evil one, fled away : and the flowing stream of our corruption was driven back to its fountain ; when the feet of the true High Priest touched the waters, Jordan, "the river of judgment," was driven back. The Ark and strength of God was there, "the waters of Jordan" were "cut off from the waters that come down from above⁹." The waters from the first Adam, our corruption, are cut off from those that flow from the Second Adam, our Righteousness. The Ark is passing over with the true Joshua, and as a memorial of the same the twelve stones are taken to serve as the twelve foundations of the City of the Lamb, the Heavenly Jerusalem ; the twelve sacrificial emblems to bear the molten Sea in the Temple of the Most High. Then, as at the new Creation of God, were the waters divided from the waters, the waters that are above from those that are below. Then the waters were divided, that Elijah and Elisha might pass over together. Then were the leprosies of our nature, as in Naaman the Syrian, left in

⁸ In Joan. xvii. 3.

⁹ Joshua iii. 13.

the waters, and our flesh came again as a little child. Then were the Heavens opened, which had been closed for the sin of Adam, sending forth the Comforter to invite us to our true home : or as St. Mark says, were "cleaved" or "rent asunder," as the veil of the Temple at Christ's death. "Opening to us the gates on high," says St. Chrysostom, "and sending down His Spirit from thence to call us, and with the greatest mark of dignity, not as Angels and Archangels, but as 'sons of God' 'and beloved.'" On the prayer of Elias the Heavens were opened in figure, and gave rain ; at the prayer of Christ the Heavens were truly opened, and the dew of the Spirit came on us. On the destruction of Sodom, "the Lord rained brimstone and fire from the Lord out of Heaven ;" but now, if we may say so, "the Lord" "from the Lord out of Heaven," rained down righteousness on the City of our righteousness, saying "drop down ye Heavens from above ; and let the skies pour down righteousness." At the Flood, "the windows of Heaven were opened," but that was for destruction ; now are they opened for salvation. The Dove comes with the fruitful branch of peace, to say that the flood of destruction is over, or rather that the flood is turned into salvation, that the laver of Redemption begins. Now may we say, "He layeth the beams of His chambers in the waters ;" He hath "made His pavilion round about Him with dark water and thick clouds to cover Him." The waters of Judgment are going down, the new Heavens and the new earth begin to appear, wherein He Who is our Righteousness shall dwell. "The tops of the mountains are seen," the mountains of the true Israel of God, encompassing the Heavenly Sion. But why was it in a bodily shape as a Dove ? The animal appearance or semblance seems to partake of the Old Dispensation, which

set its mark on animals, wherein Christ is set forth as the Lamb, and the Holy Spirit as the Dove ; for afterwards it is not so that He appears but in tongues of fire. It is also peculiarly significative of the occasion, for our Lord Himself has taught us this emblem, saying, "be ye harmless as doves." It indicated, therefore, the perfect innocence and gentleness of Christ, His meekness and lowliness: the Holy Ghost will dwell with them who are of a meek and humble spirit ; and this spirit is the especial mark of Christ, "learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly !" And it appears spoken of Him with reference to this very occasion, "the Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me ; because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek¹;" and again, "I have put My Spirit upon Him :—He shall not cry, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street ; a bruised reed shall He not break²." The bodily shape, as of a Dove, intimates all this. Moreover, the Dove is introduced throughout the Canticles as the animal expressive of love ; and love is the genuine and chief fruit of the Spirit. It was the emblem of love that appeared with the Voice that spake of the Son beloved beyond earthly love : and it is also the sign of plaintive mourning, as indicative of the Spirit Who intercedeth with groanings that cannot be uttered, for us and in us, who are as strangers and pilgrims, and "absent from the Lord." On the other occasion of the Spirit appearing visibly from Heaven it was different, with the sound of a rushing mighty wind that spoke of power ; with tongues which indicated manifestation ; and with fire that spoke of Judgment. For sins against the Son of Man shall be forgiven ; but he that speaketh against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven. This emblem was indicative of

¹ Isa. lxi. 1.

² Isa. xlii. 2, 3.

Baptismal innocence, the other of the terrors of Apostolic preaching. It was also prefigured in the Dove of Noah ; the Spirit was sent forth, not from the Ark but from Heaven itself ; and was returning thither with the first-fruits of a new world, the olive branch of reconciliation ; or as St. Chrysostom says, conveying not the branch of an olive, but the adoption of the world. Nor need we wonder if from Heaven itself there should be a visible appearance, as if of an earthly creature. It is not the Ever-blessed Spirit of God appearing in the nature of a dove, as Christ took on Himself the nature of man, as St. Chrysostom observes : but in the form or shadowy semblance as of a dove ; it is as Angels appearing in guise of men : and (if we may compare it with reverence) it is as in the revelations of things Heavenly in the Apocalypse, where there is "the Lamb in the midst of the throne." It is not in this case a shadowy representation of things spiritual by objects existing on earth, as is usual in Scripture, where animals are marked by the Law as sacrificial emblems, or types of things in morals ; but it is from Heaven a shadowy representation of things earthly to set forth things spiritual : as the cloud on the Mount of Transfiguration, and the cloudy pillar in the wilderness, and the fire of the burning bush : a semblance of things earthly in spiritual realities. And as the voice audible from heaven to one sensible organ ; so was the visible appearance from Heaven to the other.

There is observable a mysterious analogy between the Baptism of our Lord and His Transfiguration, which appears in many points remarkable. The one appears to set forth the regeneration of our souls, and the other the regeneration of our bodies ; and both as exhibited and prefigured in our Lord Himself. The one is pre-

paratory to His temptation ; the other to His death. There is, moreover, a third occasion which in these points of analogy is the counterpart of these two, which is no less than that of the Creation itself. As we might have reasonably apprehended, that at the new Creation of the soul and of the body there should be some mysterious reference and correspondence with the first Creation. At each of these three occasions are the Three Persons of the Godhead represented as present in unspeakable communion³. In each of the three occasions the Holy Spirit is spoken of as visible, or with sensible tokens of His presence. At the Creation "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters:" at our Lord's Baptism He is seen descending like a dove: at the Transfiguration the cloud seems to be the token of His presence, as so often elsewhere in Scripture. In each the presence of the Spirit is spoken of before the Voice. At the Creation the Voice of the Father to the Son is recorded, "Let Us make man in Our Image, after Our likeness:" at the Baptism the Voice is heard from Heaven, "This is My beloved Son:" and at the Transfiguration also the same Voice declaring "This is My beloved Son." And in the two latter the Son is Himself visible as man—or as God and man—fulfilling thereby the Voice as spoken at the Creation; made in the image of man, in order that man may in Him be made anew in the image of God. Moreover, the three Persons of the Godhead being set forth as present at our Lord's Baptism, seems to exhibit, as St. Ambrose has observed, our own Baptism, as being a Sacrament in the Name and the Power of the ever-blessed Trinity. And the Transfiguration seems in like manner to be a

³ See *The Holy Week*, p. 70, and *Plain Sermons*, Vol. I. Sermon **xxix.**

setting forth and an anticipation of the Judgment day, and the glorification of the bodies of His elect ; as shown in our Lord's awakening His three Disciples out of sleep by His touch and voice. On the Day of Judgment there seems in like manner to be a manifestation of the Three Persons of the Godhead: for Christ "shall come in the Glory of His Father and His own Glory." And if Moses and Elias were seen talking with Him at the Transfiguration, it may be that at His Baptism also there was some correspondence—perhaps that Elias was there in John the Baptist, and Moses in the fulfilment of the Law; as they both prefigured His fast of forty days which ensued: and that the regeneration at the Day of Judgment may have some further connexion with Moses and Elias is not improbable; Elias is constantly spoken of with a reference to our Lord's coming, and Moses as the giver of the Law.

However this may be, it is enough for us to know, that unless we be risen with Him in Baptism we shall have no part in the Second Resurrection; unless we ascend with Him from the waters, and are with Him in prayer; unless we also look steadfastly up to Heaven, and behold by faith the glory that shall be revealed; unless we also behold the Spirit, and know Him as the world knoweth Him not; unless He come down with the Father and with the Son and make His abode with us—we shall have no part with Christ.

SECTION VI

THE TEMPTATION

"And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led in the Spirit" (Luke), or as St. Matthew says, *"Then was Jesus led by the Spirit;"* and St. Mark—as if by a Divine compulsion on that humanity which shrunk from the fiery trial, as in the Garden of Gethsemane, where likewise it is said He was "withdrawn"⁴ or driven from them, as by a constraining power—*"And straightway the Spirit driveth Him"* (Mark), *"into the wilderness"* (Matt. Mark, Luke), *"to be tempted of the Devil"* (Matt.). *"And He was there in the wilderness"* (Mark), *"forty days, being tempted"* (Mark, Luke), *"of the Devil"* (Luke), *"of Satan"* (Mark). A kind of forcible constraint by the Spirit of God is often spoken of in Scripture, as in Ezekiel, "So the Spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the Lord was strong upon me⁵." And the effect of Divine approaches on humanity we have in the holy Daniel, "I was left alone, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength⁶." It is usually indeed understood differently, that "He was led," as St. Jerome says, "not as a prisoner against His will, but as one desirous for the conflict." There was no doubt a perfect acquiescence in the Divine will, as in the Garden of His agony, but still there may have been in the flesh an involuntary shrinking from contact with the

⁴ ἀπεπράσθη. Luke xxii. 41.⁵ Ezek. iii. 14.⁶ Dan. x. 8.

powers of darkness as there then was, which St. Mark would express. Yet since "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God⁷," so is it needful to show, that being declared the Son of God, He was "led by the Spirit" of God, as a perfect pattern of obedience. Thereby did He teach us, that to be born again in Baptism children of God, is not for an immunity from evil, as if we were already in Heaven, but for a severe trial so long as we are in the flesh. "My son, if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation. Set thy heart aright, and constantly endure⁸." As with the Apostles after the descent of the Spirit, as with St. Paul after his election to be "a chosen vessel" unto God, the crown held out to him is, "I will show him how great things he must suffer for My Name's sake⁹;" and as "all who will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution," so now, after His Baptism, and the Divine declaration of His Sonship, He is called to suffer. We indeed pray that God will not "lead us into temptation," for our flesh must shrink from the trial; and when we doubt in humility of our strength, we are most able to encounter it. In like manner do we pray for "our daily bread;" but Christ was willing for our sakes to forego both of these, to be without His daily bread, and to be led into temptation of a nature worse than the temptation of Job and other holy men, in proportion to His infinite power and holiness; to be reduced so low, as to be not only as one exiled from Heaven, but even to be cast out from men; to be in weakness and alone with the spirit of darkness, and suffer the assaults of the Wicked one. Submitting to be tempted, in order that He might succour those that are tempted, "not only by His aid," as St. Augustin says

⁷ Rom. viii. 14.

⁸ Eccus. ii. 1.

⁹ Acts ix. 16.

“but also by His example.” And the Spirit Himself led Him, even as it were with compulsion, in order that He might be tempted ; as the Spirit of old led Israel through the Red Sea, in order that for forty years they might be tried in that “great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions¹⁰.” And thus by the number forty did He set forth the trial of His people after Baptism in the wilderness of this life, affording them His power to “tread on scorpions and all the power of the enemy.” But as the number forty ever denotes trial and purgation, yet this probation and privation indicated by it is ever accompanied with the presence of God. As when Moses during his fast of forty days was in the Mount receiving the pattern of the Tabernacle, he was with God. As when the Apostles were for forty days receiving the pattern of the Christian Tabernacle, they were with Christ. As Elijah when he had to fast for forty days in Mount Horeb, it was to be admitted to the revelation of God. As for forty years, when Israel was tried in the wilderness, it was with the Pillar of Fire and in the peculiar presence of God. As for forty days when the flood was descending, God was with Noah ; and with His Prophet Ezekiel when appointed to “lie on the right side, and bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days, each day for a year¹¹.” So now also Christ was “full of the Holy Ghost,” was “led by the Spirit into the wilderness,” for His trial. So likewise for our forty years, or appointed season of trial, it is to be in suffering, because we are Christians : yet this trial is to be hallowed and blessed by the presence of the Spirit of God, and to be sustained with the Heavenly manna. The Spirit leads us as it were by the hand, and continues with us, and therefore though in humility we

¹⁰ Deut. viii. 15.¹¹ Ezek. iv. 6.

would at first shrink from temptation, yet when led into the same by the Good Spirit, then of such St. James says, "my brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." We must pass through fire and water; but Christ Himself is with us—"I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned¹²." And hence it is added¹³, "I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert." It is to be in the wilderness with the wild beasts; but it is to be in that wilderness together with Christ; and not only this, but it is to be at the very entrance, the outskirts and border of the Kingdom of Heaven. As with those spies who for forty days explored the Land of Promise, it was to be in sight of the giant children of Anak who dwelt there; but it was with abundance of all good things in that pleasant land, and it was with Joshua and Caleb who feared them not. For in all the good things that God bestows, the wilderness ever precedes the Canaan. The night precedes the morning; the evening and morning make the day; fasting and privations are the preparations in man to meet God: humiliation must make him small for the narrow door of the Kingdom. The fasting of Moses precedes the promulgation of the Law; the fasting of Elijah its restoration: the humiliations of David the building of the first Temple; the fasting of the people that of the second Temple¹; the confession and fasting of Daniel goes before his vision of Christ's Kingdom. The devil must be cast out "by prayer and fasting," before we are fit to appear before God.

"And He was with the wild beasts" (Mark). As for forty days with the cattle of the stall in the cave,

¹² Isa. xliii. 1, 2.

¹³ 1b. 20.

¹ Ezra viii. 23.

before His Presentation in the Temple ; so now for forty days with the beasts of the field, with the clean and unclean alike. As in the Ark—and in the “great sheet let down from Heaven,” in the vision of St. Peter, there were clean and unclean beasts, so the whole Creation groaning and travailing together in pain, waits for the adoption, and has in Christ relief ;—offering up Himself for both clean and unclean, as “the First-born of every creature.” It is as if mankind was thus in the Second Adam reconciled to the creatures ; not that they are brought to Him in His own Paradise ; but by His going down to them in the wilderness ; appearing there not as their Lord, in the dominion given to the first Adam : but as reduced to humiliation, to be as they : as the scape-goat in the wilderness ; as that king of Babylon, who for his sins was sent to have his “dwelling with the beasts of the field².” It was as Job says, “thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field : and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee³.” It was to be among wild beasts the emblems of cruelty and fierceness ; and with those whom they were intended to represent to us, the evil spirits of darkness. He to Whom “thousand thousands minister,” and “ten thousand times ten thousand stand before Him,” is cast out from men hungry and alone. He is alone as in His Passion in the garden, to take off what was said in Adam, “it is not good for man to be alone ;” for from henceforth man, though in the wilderness, is not alone ; for Christ is with him. Thus does St. Mark shortly record that mysterious conflict, leaving us by his silence to the imagining of that most dismal and terrible trial, of which we can form no adequate conception, as of His “unknown sorrows.”

² Dan. iv. 32.

³ Job v. 23.

"And He did eat nothing in those days" (Luke), *"and having fasted forty days and forty nights"* (Matt.), *"when they were finished"* (Luke), *"afterward He was an hungered"* (Matt. Luke). Did our blessed Saviour therefore fast for forty days without being an hungered until the close of that time? or was His fast of forty days not as men fast, to the suffering and sinking of the body, but by supernatural support sustained without suffering? May we not reasonably suppose, that He was enduring all that humanity could endure, in that long privation; but as Moses and Elijah were supported by the Spirit, so was He sustained, but for the fuller suffering of that hunger; till at the end of forty days He hungered: hungered with no ordinary suffering from a weakened frame. As at His death He suffered all that humanity could suffer, and then was withdrawn the sustaining of His Godhead, and with a loud voice He gave up the Ghost and died; so now He hungered. "He hungered," says St. Hilary, "not during the forty days, but after them: being sustained therein as Moses and Elias, without hunger. Therefore, when the Lord hungered, it was not that the effects of abstinence then came upon Him: but that the Power which had supported Him unaffected by that abstinence, now left His humanity to its own strength. For the devil was to be overcome, not by God, but by the flesh⁴." And thus did He teach us by His fast of forty days, wherein will be the medicine and safety of our regenerate being. As Adam fell by yielding to appetite: as Sodom was corrupted by "fulness of bread⁵" in that her "garden of the Lord;" so the forty days of His fast teaches us the means of keeping clean our Baptismal garments, in these the outskirts of the heavenly kingdom: for as the wilder-

⁴ Hom. in Matt. iii. 2.

⁵ Ezek. xvi. 49.

ness denotes the place, and the number forty the period of our pilgrimage on earth ; so we are taught also, that during this we are to wear the zone of fasting, to have our loins girded therewith for the Heavenly journey.

"And the tempter came unto Him" (Matt.), came unto Him it would seem, after He was an hungered, shrouded, as it has been said, under the necessity of nature, and veiled. As Goliath for forty days defied Israel, but at the end of that time was slain by a sling and a stone ; as for forty days the children of Anak beheld the spies of Israel, but encountered them not ; so now for forty days the devil watches our Lord but approaches not. As afterwards it is not till the hour of His agony and betrayal in the garden : so not during His fast, while He was supernaturally sustained as God, but now in His weakness when He hungered as man. "He would not have dared," says St. Hilary, "to tempt Him, had he not perceived His humanity through the weakness of hunger⁶." Such appears to be the opinion of St. Basil and others : but Origen seems to think that He was tempted during the forty days throughout, by unknown temptations ; and at length by these of a more remarkable and distinct kind at the end. Certainly the words of St. Mark (and perhaps of St. Luke), would at first sight appear to indicate this continued time of His temptation for forty days ; and yet not necessarily prove it so. The words of St. Mark are, "and He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan . . . and the Angels ministered unto Him." Now as we do not understand from this, that the Angels ministered unto Him, till after the temptation, as St. Matthew records : neither does it follow that the temptations he compendiously speaks of, were till after the forty

⁶ Comm. in Matt. iii. 3.

days which he mentions. Yet certainly Origen's opinion has in it great intrinsic probability. Bishop Andrewes is of the same opinion, that His temptations were many and divers, and for forty days, although for the most part unwritten, like divers of His miracles ; and only so much recorded as was expedient. Indeed our Lord speaks of His life as made up of temptations ; "Ye that have continued with Me in My temptations." And it appears that these three contain in them the germ of all temptations to which man is subject : and the full unfolding of them would be the development of all practical divinity or Ethics.

"And the devil said unto Him" (Luke), "if Thou art the Son of God" (Matt. Luke), "command that these stones become loaves" (Matt.), or "command this stone that it become bread" (Luke). These words derive a deep and fearful interest from the opinion of the Fathers, that it was by the testimony from Heaven at our Lord's Baptism, that the devil first comes to know of His Divinity : not being before aware of His supernatural birth. But at His Baptism, hearing the words, "This is My beloved Son ;" and then observing His extreme humiliation and suffering, he is confounded, and taking up the words from Heaven, he proceeds, "if Thou art the Son of God," why all this hunger? Why not supply Thyself at once? "In the several temptations," says St. Jerome, "the single aim of the devil is to find if He be the Son of God, but he is so answered as at last to depart in doubt." But it seems spoken not in derision but in feigned kindness. It is in itself very like the temptation He put forth to our first parents ; it takes up the words of God, and suggests a doubt of their truth, and that not by open statement, but by insinuation and

apparent inquiry. What the full nature and extent of this temptation was to our Lord we cannot presume to know, too curiously to inquire may be to look into the Ark of God to our own confusion ; it is simply stated, and there left with a veil of impenetrable mystery upon it, as there must be on every thing that relates to Him Who was God as well as Man. But as He "was tempted in all things like as we are," although without sin, if we may compare it to any human trial, we must set aside the case of ordinary men, who are tried by more gross and palpable temptations ; for the better man, even as Aristotle describes him, has so overcome himself, as to have no desires within to respond to the lower sensual temptations. We must take the temptations of devout men living by faith. If a thought of sinful distrust were presented to such a one, it would come from the evil one in something of this shape, in order to shake that highest degree of all faith, which when human means fail, still trusts in God. So likewise might it be said of the next temptation, if a subtle thought of unbelief occurred to a holy man, it might clothe itself in some form of this kind. Add to which, that there is no instance of miracles wrought in Scripture merely for the self-preservation of those that wrought them, but for the glory of God. But it must be remembered, that in Christ the fiery dart of the evil one not only found no place, but nothing in Him capable of admitting it, or vulnerable. "Sin is," as St. Gregory observes⁷, "first by suggestion, then by delight, and lastly by consent ;" the two latter of these are from our own evil nature within, and therefore could not be in Christ ; but insinuation or suggestion, which is from without, that is from the devil, this He had to

⁷ Aur. Cat. ad loc. and Augustin, *Serm. Dom. lib. i. 34.*

endure ; but it continued to be without, and found no place in Him. "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me." Our Lord's victory consisted in this, which He said on another occasion, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of, for My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work."

"*But He*" (Matt.), "*And Jesus*" (Luke), "*answered and said*" (unto him, Luke), "*It is written, that not on bread alone shall man live ; but on every word*" (Matt. Luke), "*of God*" (Luke), "*that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*" (Matt.). A reference which to us seems at once to set forth our Lord's trial, as that which was prefigured of old by Israel in the wilderness, to whom these words were spoken, "The Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee and to prove thee . . . and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna ; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord, doth man live." So that even in famine and death, to trust in God's love and promises is better than temporal life without them. In the same lesson of faith did our Lord afterwards exercise His disciples, when He sent them forth, "without scrip or purse," trusting in His word. And indeed many of the most distinguished Saints of God suffered from famine, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and Moses, and Elijah, and David ; yet endured, as "seeing Him that is invisible." And it is remarkable, that the greatest instance of faith on record, that of Abraham in offering up his son, has its memorial and mark from this characteristic, "God will provide," said Abraham to his son, and the mountain was named Jehovah-jireh, i. e. "the Lord will provide ;" will find

a way against all human appearances. As Moses said to Joshua, "the Lord God, He doth go with thee : He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." But as the expression of our Lord had reference to the manna, so may we well suppose it had also prophetically to "the true Bread from Heaven," the Word of God ; when "the Stone cut out of the mountain without hands" shall crush the great enemy, and become "the living Bread" in the wilderness of the world.

But there was a Psalm that spoke mysteriously of One that should overthrow the power of the devil, "thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder : the young lion and the dragon shalt thou tread under thy feet." It may be that the next attempt he makes is to ascertain this, by adducing not the text itself, but the previous verse : for as our Lord had quoted the Scripture, he also takes up the Scripture for his temptation, conveying thereby a subtle temptation to the Christ to disclose His power and Godhead. It may be observed, that both these temptations are precisely in the same form, "if Thou be the Son of God." And moreover it may be noticed, that although they are of an opposite character, the first tending to desperation, the second to presumption ; yet the first seems to give occasion to the second ; in the former Christ overcomes by faith ; in the latter, the devil suggests that He should presume on that faith, and so fall. It is "faith that overcometh the world," and therefore faith is first attacked ; by pride man fell, therefore pride is insinuated in all these temptations. And indeed it may be owing to this similarity in the two, that they are placed together in St. Matthew, who goes so much by the order of association, and that St. Luke's may be in this case the true order of the circumstances ;

but if so we must suppose something omitted in the account.

The occasion of this next temptation is such as to put it far out of the reach of all ordinary human temptations: whereas if, as the Fathers suppose, the Tempter appeared in a human shape, the last mentioned might be considered not very unlike such a temptation as might occur in ordinary life. But this is of another kind. We read more than once of the Prophet Ezekiel being as it were forcibly carried in vision by the Spirit of God, lifting him up and bearing him to the Temple of Jerusalem: and of Elijah also, that the Spirit of the Lord would bear him away⁸. And in the Acts of the Apostles, that "the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip⁹." So now, if one might venture to say it, does it appear as if some mysterious licence was allowed to the great enemy, even of personal power over the Ever-blessed Body of the Adorable Son of God;—a power not merely of transforming himself into an Angel of Light, but of imitating, it may be, even the works of the Most Holy Spirit. But it does not appear clear that he transported Him thither, it may be only led Him; the term in St. Luke might indicate no more than this; nor is that in St. Matthew contrary to it. "*Then the devil taketh Him up into the Holy City*" (Matt.), or as St. Luke says, "*and he led Him to Jerusalem*" (Luke), "*and set Him on a pinnacle of the Temple*" (Matt. Luke), which if it be the place Josephus speaks of, as is supposed, was an exceeding high and giddy eminence over a ravine below¹⁰. "*And saith unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down*" (from hence, Luke), "*for it is written, He shall give His angels charge over Thee (to keep Thee,*" Luke), "*and in*

⁸ 1 Kings xviii. 12.

⁹ Acts viii. 39.

¹⁰ Antiq. l. xv. 14.

their hands they shall bear Thee, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone" (Matt. Luke). But the next verse, which he forbears to quote, is being fulfilled in himself by this very incident, for thus it is that our Blessed Lord does tread the adder under His feet, and bruises the head of the old serpent. It is indeed said by ancient writers, as by Origen, St. Chrysostom, and St. Jerome, that this Psalm is not written of Christ; but still it certainly speaks of the power which His elect shall have in and by Him. But the misapplication of the Tempter consists signally in this, that, as St. Chrysostom has observed, in quoting Scripture the devil does not apply it to the end intended by Scripture in that place; for that Psalm gives no exhortation for man to cast himself down. It is applied with a wicked purpose to an end foreign to its own. The right and proper application of the promise seems to be that which our Lord makes at His betrayal in reproving St. Peter's use of the sword, "Thinkest thou I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of Angels?"—that God is always able to assist us, and will do so if need be. But in order thus to misapply it, the Tempter, we may observe, omits the important words, "to keep thee *in all thy ways*," i. e. not out of the ways which God appoints us; but in them He will preserve us "from the snare of the fowler," and "the arrow that flieth by day." "His truth shall be thy shield and buckler." This is now being signally fulfilled; for the written Word of God is the shield our Lord makes use of against the poisoned arrow, and He is saved from "the fowler's snare." Into this temptation, again, of our Lord's we must not look too narrowly; but it seems mysteriously to partake of something of universality in the temptations

of the devil among men. There is even something connected with a bodily feeling in very high overhanging places to cast oneself down. It may also be observed, that there is an indescribable agony of mind, which men are subject to from bodily or mental disease, which when the reason fails has an uncontrollable bent to self-destruction, which seems like the whisperings of the devil to cast oneself down. And, indeed, morally speaking, to raise men up in order that he may cast them down is his constant mode of temptation—exalting them with pride in order that they may fall. Something of this kind also was his temptation to our first parents, Cast yourselves down, “ye shall not surely die.” When men also in pursuit of riches or honours entangle themselves in self-induced perils to their souls, and trust that God nevertheless will deliver them from the same, it is like casting themselves down, and thus tempting God. There are indeed in these temptations, as St. Ambrose says, “the materials of every kind.” But it may be observed, that as to our first parents, they are nothing else but suggestions, the devil can do no evil to man without man consenting to the same; he cannot enter unless man opens the door.

“*And Jesus*” (Matt. Luke), “*answering*” (Luke), “*said unto him*” (Matt. Luke), “*it hath been said*” (Luke), or, “*again it is written*” (Matt.), “*thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God*” (Matt. Luke). It is not very evident what tempting God fully signifies; but when this sin is spoken of, the provocation at Massah is the occasion especially referred to—“Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God, as ye tempted Him in Massah¹,” and at that place it is thus described, “They tempted the Lord, saying, Is

¹ Deut. vi 16.

the Lord among us, or not²?" Now both of these temptations here presented to our Lord consist in requiring a sign, and bear a great resemblance to what appears afterward in those to whom our Lord says, "Ye are of your father the devil." And it is remarkable that nothing seemed to call forth in our Lord such visible expressions of grief as when those Jews demanded a sign³; proving thereby in themselves the power and success of that evil spirit who now suggests the same in vain; for of such who thus tempt God it is written, "They shall not enter into My rest⁴." It is a temper the most opposite to that of faith, which endures as seeing God without sensible indications of His Presence. And this asking for a sign in all these cases implies a demand for a demonstration of power, not of holiness or mercy, such as will be seen, perhaps, in the lying wonders of Antichrist.

"*Again the devil taketh him*" (Matt.), "*and the devil leadeth Him*" (Luke), "*into an (exceeding*" Matt.), "*high mountain, and sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world*" (Matt. Luke), "*and the glory of them*" (Matt.). "*in a moment of time*" (Luke). Whether from an exceeding high mountain he showed Him the relative position of the world's great kingdoms; or whether by a supernatural power or vision he made all these to pass before Him; or if it was all done after some manner of peculiar attractiveness and allurements to the senses in a way of which we can form no conception; or whether it was merely the strong and vehement setting forth of these things in the imagination, as he does among men—there seems no authority to determine; nor is it of any consequence. The words seem to indicate reality as from a high mountain, and yet also the supernatural vision of their

² Exod. xvii. 7.³ Mark viii. 12.⁴ Ps. xcv. 11.

glory; and the "moment of time," although it serves beautifully to express their frailty, and their momentary duration in comparison with eternity, as St. Ambrose and Origen delight to dwell on, yet the words rather intimate the rapidity of mental apprehension than real external manifestation. But of course every thing in Scripture is an exceeding reality; and as long as we adhere to the substantial verity of things recorded, we may with the Fathers suppose other meanings also, corresponding with them, of a more spiritual and allegorical kind. The tradition still exists of the spot, called Quarantania, on the mountainous district between Jerusalem and Jericho, and not far from the supposed scene of the first temptation in the desert. Maundrell speaks of it as "an exceeding high mountain, and its ascent not only difficult but dangerous."

"And the devil said unto Him, I will give Thee all this power, and the glory of them; for it hath been delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it" (Luke). And here, as to Eve when he said "Ye shall not die," he spoke what in some sense was a mixture of truth and falsehood. It was in a certain way true that these things were his, in that our Blessed Saviour Himself speaks of him as "the prince of this world," "for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, are not of the Father." They are his so far as the curse of God has passed upon them; and therefore the glory of the world may so far be of the evil one as it is attainable by evil means, and his rewards to those that serve him. But again it is false, for his gifts are unreal gifts, for thereby he promises happiness, but affords misery; it is false, for they are not his, but entirely in the hand of God, as Daniel says to Nebuchadnezzar, "The

Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will." And He allows evil men to obtain them by evil means, that they might find their own punishment therein. The lie, therefore, is doubly deceptive from the truth blended with it; or rather the very truth is worse than the falsehood, for if it is his to give at all, it is to the present misery and eternal damnation of those that receive. Whereas the promises of God are beyond the letter, so as to be sometimes apparently contrary to it on account of the substantial nature of their fulfilment; as, for instance, that "the meek shall inherit the earth" is not so true with regard to what is considered earthly inheritance as in this, that in relinquishing houses and lands they "obtain an hundred-fold in this present time," and therefore the most substantial gifts which can be attained on earth. In like manner, our Lord is now more truly obtaining "the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them" by obedience. It is on account of this His victory that the kingdoms of the world are given Him, and all the power of the enemy is put under His feet; so that He is even now obtaining them, far otherwise than the devil intended: He was like Moses, from that mountain surveying His own Land of Promise, and all that habitable world in which His Kingdom should be established.

"And he saith unto Him, all these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me" (Matt.), "if Thou, therefore, wilt worship before me, all shall be Thine" (Luke). It is not, will serve me, or be my servant (δουλεύσεις), but afford religious worship (λατρεύσεις).

"Then" (Matt.), "Jesus (answering" Luke), "said unto him, get thee hence (behind Me" Luke), "Satan. For it is

written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" (Matt. Luke). The very same words, "Get thee behind Me, Satan," our Lord uses on another occasion, when, through the medium of St. Peter, the Tempter again suggests His shrinking from the Cross. For by these means is He overcoming the world, and able to say to His Disciples, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

This temptation is again full of mystery, in some respects more so than either of the preceding; for in the palpable form in which it is here presented, it might be supposed that no one would deliberately yield to it. If the devil, known to be such, were to offer all the glory of the world to any man who would fall down and worship him, every one would with horror reject such a proposal; but in the subtle shape in which the devil clothes his offer, he succeeds in this temptation with the world at large, thereby making broad the way to ruin. We are therefore quite unable to comprehend this temptation. Much more so when the Tempter says, "All shall be Thine" to Him who knew that they all belonged to Himself only, and were His own. Our Lord implies that one soul is of value infinitely greater than the whole world, how then should He give innumerable souls for such a price? But the very mysteriousness may be most profitable to us; and if it is inexplicable and unreasonable, so indeed, when stript of its disguise, is every temptation of Satan; for knowingly to lose Heaven for earth is in every given case inexplicable and mysterious; so much so that philosophers have ever described the choices of mankind as intimating a general insanity. All we know is, that men are commonly thus overcome—overcome by "covetous-

ness, which is idolatry"—doing service to the devil, and long painful service, for the merest trifle ; generally speaking, he has no occasion to offer the whole world for a soul, for he can obtain men and have them in possession for small gains. There is, then, that in our nature which is thus accessible to the Tempter ; and therefore our Lord as man was thus assailed, "being tempted in all things like as we." And it may be that as in the two former cases the object of the devil was to ascertain if He was the Son of God, that having failed in that object, he now tempts Him as man : seeing Him one apparently in extreme poverty, but as yet altogether untouched by his power, he makes Him the greatest offer ever made to man, and that for one slight service. And perhaps in this final result there may be something similar to our Lord's conduct in the case of the impenitent Jews, when they demanded a sign. Our Lord granted it not, but said they should have the sign of the Prophet Jonas ; i. e. that they would have a sign in His death which their wickedness would occasion, and consequently in His Resurrection, whereby He would give them a sign to show them what they had done and Who He was ; so now He grants not the devil a sign of His Godhead, for which he had twice asked ; till proceeding onward to this blasphemy, our Lord overthrows him by His meek reply ; while at the same time, by His command, "Get thee behind Me, Satan," He speaks with all the power and awfulness of God, and is obeyed. For thus He stands disclosed before him. For we find that after this occasion the devils know Him, and in torment cry out at beholding Him, "Hast Thou come hither to torment us before the time ? I know Thee Who Thou art, the Holy One of God." And it has been well observed, that the former temptations our Lord endured,

as they did not so directly touch on the Majesty of God ; but when this is the case, as with those who defiled the Temple, or sin against the Holy Ghost, or in those things that affect the redemption of mankind—as when St. Peter would deprecate His Cross—this He endures not for a moment, but affords us an example, by casting instantly behind such temptation without suffering any parley with it.

Thus was our Lord thrice assayed by the evil one in vain : thrice to overcome implies the fulness and completeness of the victory ; and it does so, no doubt, from this sacred number Three, which has a Divine and hidden strength in all things, so much so as to prevail universally in all times and in all languages. Thrice to overcome, or thrice to be overcome, is ever put for that which is final ; and among the Greek combatants the title of triple vanquisher (*τριακτῆρ*) was the highest victor. In nature the third wave surpasses the preceding : “a third time” the Lord called Samuel ; “a third time” Elijah poured water on the sacrifice ; “a third time” our Lord prayed in the garden ; and “a third time” St. Paul prayed, and prevailed.

It may be observed, that in all these things Christ vanquished by humility ; this was the principle in all, as the sling and the stone of David ; there was a remarkable absence of any thing of the heroic kind ; there was no display of Divine power ; all was such a victory as man might obtain if perfect in faith, and clothed all over at every point with humility ; showing throughout invincible patience and imperturbable gentleness, from trust in God. He does not even throughout own Himself God, but argues as man, and reposes as man upon the Scriptures ; “Man doth not live by bread alone,” as if He were con-

tent to be as man in that trial : and again, "It is written." And He even submits, (O incomparable depth of humility and inexhaustible patience for our sakes !) He submits to be taken up or led from place to place by the evil one : being perfectly armed with lowliness. In like manner as with Judas also He was so long-suffering : and surely to be carried about by the great enemy was a more severe trial of His forbearance, than to be dragged about by the soldiery and people as a helpless victim. O inconceivable height and depth of meekness ! as it is higher than Heaven above, so is it deeper than Hell below ; for to the lowest depths of Hell were we falling by our pride, till even from thence hath He raised us by His lowliness. He overcame in all things as man ; and hereby, as Leo has well observed, "did He confer unspeakable dignity on human nature ; in that He opposed the adversary not by miracles, but by the testimonies out of the Law : at the same time giving honour to man and disgrace to the adversary : for the enemy of mankind seems to be overcome not by God, but by man⁵."

But although pride chiefly marks the fall of man, and humility his recovery, yet in these temptations there are all the same insinuations of evil, as to our first parents. In both alike there are the suggestions of appetite, ambition, covetousness : appetite in this, "command that these stones be made bread :" ambition, "if Thou be the Son of God :" covetousness appealed to in this, "all these things will I give Thee." Thus to Adam and Eve, the first was suggested by the forbidden fruit, "pleasant to the eyes and good for food :" the second in the promise, "ye shall be as gods :" and the third in this, "hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree?" In both cases alike

⁵ Serm. xxxix. 3. Aur. Cat. in Matt.

the wicked one insinuates curiosity ; in both alike distrust of God, and doubt of His word. Is God indeed so gracious ! your eyes shall be opened ; ye shall not die : and to our Blessed Saviour, art Thou indeed the Son of God, as He has declared ? If Thou art so, prove the same. Why art Thou thus an hungred ? In both cases alike it is by questionings and suggestings, rather than by open avowal of evil. But of our first parents his temptation was in the midst of great abundance, and in a plentiful garden : of Christ, in want of all things, and in a barren desert. His temptation of our first parents was perhaps more like what it has been since with men left to the law of nature, whom he ever labours to urge on to that which is forbidden ; as when he said, Is there any thing which God hath withholden ? so hath he impelled the natural man to unnatural crimes, to build a tower to Heaven, to be as gods. But to us regenerate at Baptism, it is more like the temptation of Christ, first to doubt privileges vouchsafed from Heaven, "if Thou *be* the Son of God : " then to have worldly wants gratified as proof of the same ; and from thence to spiritual pride and ambition. From the wilderness to the Temple ; from the Temple to the mountain : from humiliation to presumption ; from presumption to worldly-mindedness : thus is it with individuals, and thus it may be with Churches. They are founded in humiliation, then, it may be, become proud of holiness, and from thence they grasp at worldly power.

"Then the devil leaveth Him" (Matt.). *"And having finished all the temptation, the devil departed from Him for a season"* (Luke.) By this expression "for a season," there is perhaps nothing more implied than what is usual with all assaults of the devil, that when signally overcome

he is baffled and thrown back for a while, according to the promise which has a proverbial force, "resist the devil, and he will flee from you." And certainly the calm peace of mind which ensues on mastering temptation, is that to which he approaches not, but it is as the ministry of Angels, or of One higher than Angels. Or the words "for a season" might signify that he retired till he could find another opportunity. Or as many consider it, that he retired till his great and last season of attack in our Lord's agony; of which our Lord Himself speaks, "the prince of this world cometh"—and again, "this is your hour and the power of darkness." It may be too, that this was his great season of temptation in one kind, viz. as consisting in his presenting to the mind things pleasing to the flesh and natural man: but the other his great attempt in presenting things of exceeding terror and anguish in the hour of mental and bodily agony. Thus Theophylact says, "Having tempted Him in the desert with pleasure, he retires from Him until the Crucifixion, when he was about to tempt Him with sorrow⁶."

"*And the Angels*" (Mark), "*and behold, Angels came and*" (Matt.) "*ministered unto Him*" (Matt. Mark). If our Lord's last words to the devil were accompanied with the manifestation of Divine power; no less did this ministry of Angels which ensued render it evident to those spirits of darkness Who He was. It is mentioned especially in St. Mark's concise account, as if this their ministry at this time was of no little moment in the Divine economy;—they waited on Him as the Son of Man, in like manner as on His final victory, such mention is emphatically made of Angels being made subject unto Him⁷, i. e. as Son of Man: this ministry therefore was the earnest

⁶ Aur. Cat. in Luc.

⁷ 1 Pet. iii. 22. Eph. i. 21.

and first-fruits of His dominion. Thus is it in His elect, as St. Hilary has observed, when they have overcome the devil, and bruised the head of the serpent, angelic ministries will not be wanting. So it is, whether we take it as applicable to this life, when they are “sent forth to minister unto those who shall be heirs of salvation ;” or of that time when they carry the soul of Lazarus to be “in Abraham’s bosom ;” or when as our Lord graciously says of those that shall faithfully serve Him, He will Himself “make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and minister unto them.” And all these things are pre-figured in the Church by the forty days of Lent, and the Eucharistic Feast of Easter that follows.

SECTION VII

THE TESTIMONY OF JOHN

As our Lord’s Baptism appears to have been immediately followed by His Temptation, and as the testimony of John which now ensues, is connected in time with the circumstances of our Lord’s return to Galilee, there can be no doubt that it must occupy the place here assigned to it—after His return from the wilderness. It is recorded by St. John alone ; and it may be observed, that this Evangelist not only mostly describes the sphere of Christ’s ministry with reference to Jerusalem, but especially as connected with those in authority there. The circumstance afterwards incidentally disclosed, of St. John’s acquaintance with the High Priest, might be the human means of his more familiar knowledge of such occurrences ; or it might be, that writing so much later he is able to mention

these and other matters, that affected men in authority at Jerusalem, when that city had ceased to exist. There were moreover, perhaps, circumstances of a private nature which led "the beloved disciple" to dwell with peculiar interest on these days ; as will be spoken of hereafter. Still higher reasons, however, may be found in the mode of his introducing the subject here. For it is in the opening of his Gospel, in his first solemn declaration of our Lord's Divine nature, on which subject he adduces the repeated testimonies of the Baptist, and especially this his answer to a formal deputation from Jerusalem. It was secretly ordained by Providence, that "the voice in the wilderness" should bear evidence of Christ to the Pharisees themselves at Jerusalem, and that in a manner the most solemn and important. For in this testimony of the holy Baptist are found those credentials which our Lord Himself appealed to, on taking openly upon Him His office of teaching in the Temple ; and also previously in Jerusalem. "There is another that beareth witness of Me, and I know that the testimony which he beareth of Me is true. Ye sent unto John."

"And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent Priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?" They sent an official deputation from their own Sanhedrim of the most grave persons, as to one himself of a Priestly family, coming in the way of the Law, and having already commanded great respect among the people as a Prophet ; so much so, that the multitudes who came to his Baptism, are represented as musing in their hearts, whether he were the Christ or not. And the Baptist's immediate reference in his reply to this point, indicates that such might be supposed to be in the thoughts of those who now came to question him, although there was no

allusion to it in their inquiry. "*And he confessed, and denied not, but confessed, I am not the Christ.*" The further questions may all have been made at the same time; but Origen supposes that the narrative of St. John is not continuous, but that it comprehends the substance of three different missions from Jerusalem, of which the first is that which is already given; the second containing the further inquiries of what they might suppose him to be; and the last, a demand of his authority for baptizing. According to this, we must suppose them now to have returned home with that important reply to their inquiry, that he was not the Christ: but as his influence continued to increase, and their curiosity was far from being lessened, they send a second time. "*And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that Prophet? and he answered, No.*" He was not strictly Elias in the sense they supposed; but in that higher and more spiritual sense in which he shall be known to be such, and justified by the children of Wisdom; as Christ afterwards declared him to be the promised Elias, to them who would receive him as such. But still there is an apparent contradiction between these two opposite statements of our Lord and the Baptist himself; the One saying, that he was; and the other of himself, that he was not the intended Elias. Such difficulties in Holy Scripture almost always contain some great mystery: and St. Augustin explains it, by supposing that the coming of Elijah, properly speaking, is to be before the second Advent of Christ; and that his appearing in John the Baptist was but figurative, and in a secondary sense. And therefore, with respect to that higher fulfilment of the prophecy before Christ's second Advent, he is not Elias: but in the other sense, to the spiritual-minded who will see him in the

figure, he is Elias⁸. And Gregory expressing the same opinion, says that our Lord confessed him to be Elias, speaking of "the spirit and power of Elias," in which he came. John denied that he was, speaking of the person of Elias. For Christ was speaking to His disciples who might understand things spiritual: John to those who could not. But these questions are in themselves full of interest, as showing the universal expectation, which now reigned in all minds, not only of the coming of Christ, but likewise of the previous fulfilment of the last words of Malachi; and also of "that Prophet" whom Moses had spoken of so long before. The appearance of this Prophet was of no little moment, as he said expressly, that whosoever "will not hear that Prophet shall be destroyed from among the people." He was to be a Prophet like unto Moses, as promulgator of the new Law, and, in a higher sense than Moses was, a Mediator between God and man. It was indeed a prophecy, which although they knew it not, yet contained greater things than any such resemblance between Moses and Christ, in those points of his character and history in which the former was a type of the latter; as the shadow in its great outlines and lineaments sets forth the substance on which it attends. For that great prophecy did in fact signify no less than this, that God would Himself appear among them as Man, as "one of their brethren, raised up from among them," to give them laws, with all things appertaining to human sympathies and approaches. "According to all thou desiredst in Horeb, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire, that I die not. And the Lord said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them

⁸ In Joan. Tr. iv. 5.

up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee." It was on their complaining of the terrors of the Voice of God*, amidst the thunders and lightnings from Mount Sinai, on which God was graciously pleased to say, that He Himself would speak to them as the Son of Man, in Christ Jesus. It was the instinctive call of distressed human nature to God the Father, for a Mediator to stand between us and Him : and His own merciful acceptance of that call.

But the Priests and Levites having, as Origen supposes, gone back on the first occasion without succeeding in their curiosity, are not now content with mere negatives, and return to their first question, "*They said therefore unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer unto them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord, as said the Prophet Esaias.*" It is enough that I am that harbinger of Christ, whom the Prophet hath spoken of, as one that should precede His coming. The wonderful humility of the Baptist is remarkable. He never speaks of himself, or of his Baptism, but to depreciate ; he is himself but the voice : his Baptism is but the image of the true, having no life in it. He might have appealed to Malachi or other prophetic testimonies of himself, but in this his humility delighted ; "I am the voice;" nothing but an empty sound of preparation : for in that description of Isaiah he is lost in the glory of Christ and His coming. And how different is our Blessed Saviour's account of him to his own ! "A Prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a Prophet. For this is he of whom it is written, Behold I send My messenger before Thy face." And, "if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come¹."

* Deut. xviii. 16.

¹ Matt. xi. 9. 14.

"And they that were sent were of the Pharisees;" were not only Priests and Levites, but of that sect which was so strict in the interpretation and knowledge of the Scriptures, to whom such a prophecy of Isaiah could not but be understood, and who were so scrupulous with regard to legal washings. Origen seems to think that this is introduced with respect to those who put the last question; in distinction from the former, who were Priests and Levites, with a better intention and manner. But it may be merely descriptive, as a part of that circumstantial accuracy with which the Evangelist gives the whole of this detail, specifying the occasions, persons, and successive days wherein these things occurred.

However that may be, this appeal to the Prophet Isaiah was of too high and spiritual a nature for the carnal minds of these Pharisees; they had no thought of attending to "the voice" in the wilderness; but were curious about his person, and as afterwards with our Lord, scrupulous and jealous as to his authority. Again, therefore, they send, with no allusion to his own answer. *"And they inquired of him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that Prophet?"* The answer of John seems intended to allay their jealousies, by stating that he claimed no great authority, that he was but a servant, and a most unworthy one, not meet for the lowest service, in the presence of Another, before Whom both they and he were standing at that very moment, and in Whose presence both of them had well need to tremble. *"John answered them, saying, I baptize with water;"* my baptism is, like your own washings, but an empty rite, and a mere shadow compared with the Baptism of Him that is to come. He speaks, says Chrysostom, of his own Baptism

as so insignificant and vile, and having nothing in it more than water, to show the exceeding greatness of that Baptism which is given by Christ. "*But there standeth among you,*"—that very Prophet Who is to be raised up from the midst of you, already among you, though ye think not—One "*Whom ye know not; He it is Who coming after me is preferred before me, Whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.*" The expression seems to have been one which he commonly used respecting our Lord, the very same that St. Mark and St. Luke record, and St. Paul also in his discourse to the Jews at Antioch². Beautiful expression, that intimates to all ages the unspeakable greatness of him that used it, to be brought to love Christ so much as to delight in his own abasement at the thought of Him! "If John says this," adds St. Chrysostom, "what must we say, who fall as far beneath the virtue of John, as earth is below Heaven³?"

"*These things happened in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.*" The place apparently where our Saviour on one occasion retired to from Jerusalem; and it is spoken of in the Old Testament⁴ in a manner that would lead one to suppose it to have been a remarkable ford of the Jordan, from its ease of access probably, or being in the way of concourse. The way which Gideon seized for the strength of Israel against Midian: the way, it has been supposed, where Joshua led over the children of Israel; but the Baptist stands "beyond," and on the other side of the Sacred River; on the other side of the promised Canaan; this is the way from the wilderness to the Heavenly Jerusalem; the way by which we must go to the true Passover; the way of repentance, where sins are washed out and Canaan begins.

² Acts xiii. 25.

³ In Joan. xvi. 3.

⁴ Judges vii. 24.

It was on the day after this occurrence that John the Baptist made that remarkable declaration of our Lord's pre-existence, which this Evangelist had mentioned in the beginning of his Gospel; and he now describes the occasion on which it was uttered; telling us that it was made with reference to what he had said on the previous day in answer to the Priests and Levites from Jerusalem: and which he now states on beholding our Blessed Lord, in those words before recorded. A very peculiar interest is attached to the whole circumstance, from the great probability that the beloved disciple, being himself at that time in attendance on the holy Baptist, was a witness of that his reply to the Pharisees; and that now he was perhaps privately one of the persons addressed by the Baptist in those words which he has so solemnly recorded;—that it was perhaps the first time of his beholding Christ;—and still more probably, the first and ever long-cherished declaration he had heard of His Godhead; the first kindling of that Divine love in his bosom, which soon burnt up every consideration of an earthly nature, making all things like to itself, in the participation of its heavenly radiance. On the previous day the holy Baptist had said to the Pharisees, “there standeth One among you,” as if our Lord might have been even then unknown and unobserved among the crowd; but on this day we behold Him as it were with the eyes of the Evangelist himself, as if for the first time.

“*On the following day John beholdeth Jesus coming unto him;*” sees Him probably at a distance, for he seems to have made the declaration respecting Him before He had come up to them, and there is all appearance of its having been said privately to a few of his own disciples;—“*and saith, Behold the Lamb of God,*

Which taketh away the sin of the world." It may be asked, why these were the terms in which the Baptist declares Him? It may be, that others came to confess, but that He, although coming among them, needed no confession, for He was spotless: or it may be that these words of the Baptist had the most close reference to his own preaching of repentance and his Baptism; for what could repentance avail without remission? and what could baptizing in water signify but the washing away of sins? and how could this be without a victim? and what terms could better express this victim than those the Prophet had used, of "a Lamb brought to the slaughter⁵," "as a sheep before her shearers is dumb⁶:" the Lamb of God at which Philip began to teach the Ethiopian Eunuch; the Lamb of God seen in the Revelation! What could better set forth that Victim for which all nature cried aloud, than the Lamb of Moses, still commemorated in the morning and evening sacrifice? and what could better express the spotless nature of Him, of Whom he said, "I have need to be baptized of Thee"? This is the Lamb Which God hath prepared, and Which God will accept; the Lamb typified of old, when they passed the Red Sea; the Lamb set forth by Abel, being the price of his own blood; the Lamb of God Which hath even now overcome the wolves in the desert, and teacheth us from His own example to be "as lambs among wolves;" a Lamb, the Little One, for the little ones of His flock most resemble Him, and are most dear to Him. The "Lamb without blemish and without spot, —fore-ordained before the foundation of the world⁷." The morning and evening Lamb that must be offered every morning and evening by our prayers through Him

⁵ Jer. xi. 19.⁶ Isa. liii. 7.⁷ 1 Pet. i. 19, 20.

by Whom alone we have remission of our sins. This is the Victim on which all the day long our souls must feed, that He may be "the Lord our inheritance." Here on the banks of the Jordan, that river of death, that sacred river of Baptism, do we see the Lamb of God, at Bethabara, the passage of Jordan, leading to the Heavenly Kingdom. And, perhaps, we might venture to suppose it to be not improbable that this expression of the holy Baptist, on beholding Christ, might have had a reference to his own secret intercourse with those disciples to whom it was spoken. For if they were St. John the Evangelist, and such as he, surely they had repented according to the Baptist's teaching, and had confessed their sins, and were such as would have earnestly longed for some remission beyond what he could offer; such must have been the deepest and strongest wish present to their hearts, as the Baptist well knew; what, therefore, could he do for such but to point out to them the "Lamb of God" as such? "*This is He of Whom I spake*" in my reply yesterday to the Pharisees, "*After me cometh a Man Which is preferred before me: for He was before me.*" I have spoken of Him before, that I was unworthy to be His servant, it was not from personal knowledge that I spake. "*And I knew Him not, but that He might be manifested to Israel.*" I came neither to confer repentance, nor to wash away sin, but that He might be known, so that all flesh might in Him see the salvation of God; I was yesterday asked why I baptized; this is the reason; "*therefore have I come baptizing with water.*" "With water," he adds, never speaking of his own Baptism but to state his low estimate of the same, in comparison with the unspeakable laver of Christ.

From the mode in which the Evangelist proceeds to

introduce the following words, it would appear as if they were not spoken continuously with the former, nor at the moment of this incident when Christ was in sight approaching; but whenever uttered, they are necessary to explain the words that he had just spoken, that he "knew Him not." *"And John testified, saying, I beheld the Spirit descending as a dove from Heaven, and It abode upon Him."* The term "abiding" is on other occasions used of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and of God^a, but here with a peculiar energy of description; abiding upon Him, as Gregory says, with a true and peculiar abiding as with God, in that He never departeth from Him, being One with Him. But on men He cometh and goeth "as the wind," excepting so far as they partake of Christ's Divinity abiding in them, with an everlasting abode, according to His promise. For in such a case His operation and presence is permanent, as seen in meekness and charity, and all the fruits of the Spirit; with a permanence and stability which is unlike any thing earthly, being from Christ, and partaking of His immortality and continuance. *"And,"* as I said, *"I knew Him not, but He that sent me to baptize with water, the Same said unto me, On whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and abiding on Him, the Same is He that baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I beheld, and have testified that This is the Son of God."* It might indeed be that he had never seen Him before to know Him; but previously to this, his declining to baptize Him as One so much superior to himself, seems not altogether to allow of such a supposition. It may be observed that the Evangelist throughout, especially in this first chapter, is speaking of our Lord's Godhead, in testimony to which

^a John xiv. 16. 23, and Chap. xv. 4--6.

he adduces the Holy Baptist. And the mention of knowledge in speaking of Christ and of God, like that of faith, from its being so much a matter of various degrees, occasions an apparent contradiction in other places. Thus we find St. Peter declaring Christ "the Son of God" apparently for the first time at his memorable confession, and yet many months before that he declared, "we believe, and are sure, that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God:" so likewise the disciples are spoken of as having faith, and yet afterwards, as not having faith, but needing it; and even at last it is said to St. Peter "when thou art converted," as if even then he had yet to be converted, and to come to the faith. The blessed Virgin herself seems at one time to know Him, at another to marvel at the manifestation of Him. So infinite is Divine knowledge; and, therefore, it is perfectly consistent with this that the Baptist should declare he had not known Christ till His Baptism, inasmuch as He knew not His unspeakable greatness; and yet should just before that manifestation have declared himself abashed before Him. St. Augustin explains it at large*, that he knew Him to be the Christ, but knew not His inalienable incommunicable Baptism with the Holy Ghost; such as He never would depute to another, but which, whether He appeared on earth or was ascended to Heaven, should be His own and only Baptism through means of His servants unto the end. Thus it may be that John was sent to baptize, but he knew that his Baptism was but a shadow of the true, limited and circumscribed both in its power and in its duration; He, therefore, Who sent Him to baptize, revealed unto him that higher Baptism, which would truly avail to the washing of the

* Consen. Evan. lib. ii. 32, and in Joan. Tr. v. 9.

soul ; and told him of its commencement, which would be visibly revealed unto him from Heaven, when He should come to be baptized, Who had the unspeakable gift. This he needed to know for his office sake, as the herald, but no more than this. The opinion of St. Jerome seems to be, in some degree, to the same effect, that he knew Him to be Christ the Son of God, but knew not that it was by His Baptism that He would save the world.

But still it may be explained in another way, that the holy Baptist having been living for thirty years, not among the houses of men, but in the desert, was in fact quite ignorant of the Person of Christ ; that he was so little a respecter of persons that he knew Him not in the flesh. And it was adding thereby to the very weight of his unbiassed testimony, that he prepared the way for One of Whom he knew nothing, but what God had written on his own heart : that what he knew of Him was neither from private nor personal acquaintance, nor from public report, but entirely from a Divine revelation and mission. That, like St. Paul, he could say, “when it pleased God Who separated me from my mother’s womb, to reveal His Son in me,” “I conferred not with flesh and blood¹.” And thus, when our Lord came to be baptized, he then, for the first time, knew Who He was, and immediately afterwards received that visible sign and confirmation of the Spirit which marked Him out from on high by the descending Dove. This latter is the opinion of St. Chrysostom², who supposes that St. John, although of our Lord’s kindred, yet was not acquainted with Him even by sight ; for although many remarkable circumstances had occurred at the time of our

¹ Gal. i. 16.

² Hom. in Joan. vii.

Lord's birth, yet the Baptist being then a child, and having since lived in a desert, had been ignorant of those circumstances that marked Him out as the Christ. The discrepancy between these two opinions is not so great as it might appear at first sight. St. Augustin supposes Christ well known to the Baptist, but some mystery of His economy not disclosed to Him till His Baptism. St. Chrysostom:—that He was not known to St. John in person till He came to be baptized. But we may venture to set aside this previous question of personal knowledge, and what is known and evident will on either supposition be clear and consistent. It appears that when Christ comes to be baptized He was known by the Baptist as one pre-eminently Holy, and yet that He was not then known as He afterwards was. And this is quite what one would naturally suppose; our Lord could not have appeared before so great a Prophet as the Baptist to be baptized of him, among those who came confessing their sins, without his perceiving that He was One infinitely more holy than himself: and yet his thoughts could not then have conceived any thing so great as was afterwards revealed in the manifestation from above.

SECTION VIII

DISCIPLES BROUGHT TO CHRIST

AN exceeding interest is attached to all this narrative, from its being highly probable that "the beloved Disciple" is giving the account of circumstances that attended the beginnings of his own conversion, and the breaking

in of the everlasting Light upon his soul. The very days, how each succeeded the other, are thus vivid in the retrospect; hallowed with the Divine light, and fresh with the dews of that first morning of Grace. Thus the dawns of that new life may be remembered by spirits in eternity; as they came forth like the first streaks of light, or the shadows that accompany the rising of a summer day. And this may account for the expression that marks the introduction of each incident, "on the morrow," "on the next day," "on the third day," and his mentioning even the very hour of their being with Him.

"On the morrow John stood, and two of his disciples;"—stood, as the manner of his teaching was;—"and looking on Jesus as He walked," apparently in a direction from them, so that He was as if He saw them not, *"he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!"* Although himself the great harbinger, yet not to all did he point Him out thus expressly, but to two of his own most favoured disciples: and although his wish doubtless was that they should leave him for his Holy Master; yet on this, as on the other remarkable occasion, when he sent two of his disciples to Christ with an inquiry, it was but in a covert manner that he suggested what he wished; and even now he does it for a second time; so little apparent was his wish; in order that they might by their own free choice attach themselves to Christ. And this he does by pointing Him out again by a Name which must be ever most endearing to a sinner;—a Name in which this disciple peculiarly delights, dwelling upon the same in the Revelation also. *"And the two disciples heard Him speaking, and"*—understanding at length the intimation given them—*"they followed Jesus. And Jesus having turned, and seen them following, saith unto them, What seek ye?"*

He turned to them, for on those whom He knows to be following Him, He ever turns the light of His gracious countenance ; and He makes it their own request, by saying, "What seek ye?" for it is He that hath said, "seek and ye shall find." As with the Canaanitish woman, as with the blind Bartimeus, as with the two disciples at Emmaus, as when He was walking by on the waters ; He leads them first to ask, in order that He may bestow. As the father called not first his prodigal son, but when he came towards him, he hastened to meet him. "Hereby are we instructed," says St. Chrysostom, "that He doth not anticipate our wills by His gifts ; but when we begin, and set forth the will, then He Himself affords occasions of salvation*." He Himself indeed walketh in our hearts, and asketh, not that He may know, but that He may draw out our desires after Him. And on their part it is like the request of St. Peter, "Lord, bid me come unto Thee ;" for they wish to come, but cannot until He bids them. "*They said unto Him, Rabbi, which is, being interpreted, Master, where abidest Thou? He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where He abode.*" They ask not to be instructed by Him in the way where they now were, but ask for His abode, which is, says St. Cyril, the Church, in which He abides. And He tells them not, but bids them "come and see," for obedience is the way to His abode ; and their obedience is instant, for "they came and saw." So also of His abode, which is in Heaven, the first movement of grace is the heart which saith, Lord, "where dwellest Thou?" And His reply ever hath been, "come and see." "I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, ye may be also." He is Himself the way, for He is our obedience ; and He also is

* Hom. in Joan. xviii. 3.

the end, for He is Himself our abode and rest; and we must know by experience that He is so; we must "come and see." "*And with Him they abode that day,*" which was indeed, as the words seem to indicate, nearly a whole day, for "*it was about the tenth hour:*" or, as we conclude, ten o'clock in the morning⁴: not, as St. Chrysostom and other writers suppose, towards the close of the day, and at sunset; which the tenth hour would be in the other three Evangelists. But St. Austin speaks mystically, that ten is the number of the Commandments which are now fulfilled in the new Law of Love. At all events, they stay long with Him: as on the other occasion, when John sent two disciples to Christ, they continued with Him a sufficient time to behold His miraculous works, so now do these, long enough to learn of themselves from His Heavenly discourses: wherein He perhaps opened to them their own hearts and lives; and manifested Himself as "bearing their sins and healing their infirmities," in the light in which especially they came to Him as "the Lamb of God." "How blessed," exclaims St. Augustin, "the day they passed, how blessed the night! Who is there that shall tell us what things they heard from the Lord? Let us also ourselves build and make a dwelling-place in our hearts, whither He may come and instruct us, and converse with us⁵."

"*Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who heard from John, and followed Him.*" There is no evidence who the other Disciple was whose name is not mentioned, but one is naturally led to suppose it to be St. John himself; partly from the minuteness of the circumstantial detail, which has the character of a person speaking of things in which he himself took part; and

⁴ See *The Passion*, p. 255.

⁵ In *Joan. Tr.* vii. 9

partly because the mode in which the name is dropped resembles this Disciple's manner of speaking of himself, although in the latter part of his Gospel it has usually the distinguishing addition of "whom Jesus loved"—a description here uncalled for. Add to which, that as the companion of St. Andrew it seems probable that it was either St. John, or St. James his brother. St. Chrysostom mentions it as the opinion of some, that it was the Evangelist himself, but expresses no judgment of his own; St. Cyril, Theophylact, and others mention it as the more probable opinion: Epiphanius thinks it might have been St. James. But at all events, this very silence of the Evangelist is of itself instructive; for thus it is that holy Scripture never introduces the mention of persons to record their own distinction (and what distinction could be greater among men than this?), but merely so far as the narrative requires it. Thus in this case the narrative requires the express mention of St. Andrew; for it goes on to add, "*He first findeth,*" i. e. according to our reading, he is the first to find—taking "first" as the adjective (*πρῶτος*, not as some *πρῶτον*); he first findeth "*his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ:*"—"the Christ" in Greek, and in our language, "the Anointed One." It is "*the Christ,*" as before it was "*the Lamb;*" for, as Chrysostom observes, the article is prefixed to the designations of Christ as peculiarly His own, in the sense they are not applied to another. He is "the Anointed One," for all Christians, says St. Austin, are anointed in Him, but God hath anointed Him "above His fellows," and therefore He is "the Anointed." But the words of St. Andrew are, as St. Chrysostom says, "the words of a soul travelling in pain for that Presence,

and looking for its coming from above, and being exceedingly overjoyed at the attainment of the object of its hopes, and hastening to impart to others the good tidings⁶." It appears from the words that they had been long enough with Him to know of themselves that He was indeed the Christ, and the whole subject seems to be introduced in order to record this first calling of St. Peter. St. John, with affectionate interest, delights to mention from first to last all that appertained to his friend the great Apostle; and we learn from it that our Lord in preferring St. Peter to his elder brother, on account of qualifications that suited him better for that pre-eminence among the Twelve, yet afforded to St. Andrew the priority in time, in being himself first called, and the privilege of being the first to bring to Him his more distinguished brother. "*And he led him to Jesus. And Jesus looked on him, and said, Thou art Simon the son of Jonas; thou shalt be called Cephas, which is, being interpreted, Peter.*" This is all that is recorded of that transaction, for the calling of St. Peter was of itself sufficiently worthy of mention. And our Lord speaks here as He does through the Holy Scriptures, in which the giving or changing a name by God Himself is replete with great things, for His Word is the creative cause of all things; thus was it when of old He converted Abram to Abraham, Sarai to Sarah, Jacob to Israel; and gave to some their names at birth, as that of Isaac, of Solomon, of John, and others, indicating thereby the greatness of the things He would fulfil in them. The first words were an expression of endearment and personal knowledge, "Thou art Simon, the son of Jonas,"—"I know thee by thy name, thou art Mine;" and the last of future exaltation, "I will give

⁶ In Joan. xviii.

thee a new name,"—"Thou shalt be called Cephas." And both, as St. Chrysostom has noticed, bear testimony to our Lord's Divinity; for this more than any thing else, is the attribute of God, to know the future. Thus to Nathanael afterwards, and to the Samaritan woman, He foretold things to come, and as a pledge of the truth, He disclosed His knowledge of things past and present—a circumstance which even at the last seems to have impressed His Disciples with the sense of His Godhead more than any thing else—"We are sure that Thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask Thee; by this we believe that Thou camest forth from God." And thus, as St. Andrew had the Baptist's testimony to the Messiah, St. Peter had at once that of Christ Himself. If we look to mystical signification, it is as if He had said, "Thou art Simon, that is obedient; but this hereafter shall be united with Peter, thy obedience shall be built on the rock; and the floods shall arise and the winds beat on thee in vain." And the name given to St. Peter was of itself, as St. Augustin says, a figure of the Church, as if the calling of St. Peter was the call of the Church prefigured thereby; for the Church itself is the Rock, and built on the Rock which is Christ. Or perhaps it would appear from our Lord's words, on the confession of St. Peter, that faith in His Godhead was the rock which St. Peter then acknowledged, upon which His Church should be built, and against which the gates of Hell should not prevail.

"On the following day Jesus wished to go forth unto Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow Me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter." The mention of this latter circumstance seems to intimate, that when our Blessed Lord to all

appearance so spontaneously called upon Philip to follow Him, He probably well knew some conversation which had already taken place between him and those his friends and countrymen; for with none were they more likely to converse than with this friendly Disciple, their fellow-countryman. Especially was this the case with St. Andrew who appears at all times to be the friend of St. Philip; for to him St. Philip seems to communicate every event that occurred⁷. Theophylact notices this mention of their city, as intimating mutual intercourse on the subject. It may further be observed that Philip says to Nathanael "We have found," intimating not his own call only, but that he had been communicating with others. And moreover it may have been the case, as St. Chrysostom has suggested, that Philip was himself known to Christ as being born and brought up in Galilee. And if this be so, it would add a peculiar force to our Lord's words to him at the last Supper—"Have I been so long with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip?" St. Chrysostom, indeed, suggests not only previous knowledge of Christ, and some intercourse with Andrew and Peter; but also a Divine operation and efficacy in Christ's word that called him, "Follow Me." Certainly the whole passage indicates considerable knowledge Who the Christ was in St. Philip, from what he immediately says to Nathanael, and also some previous acquaintance with the Person of our Lord and His family. "*Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found Him, of Whom Moses wrote in the Law, and the Prophets, Jesus the Son of Joseph, Him of Nazareth.*"—But in fact, as He was not the Son of Joseph, neither was He of Nazareth.—"*And Nathanael said unto him, From Nazareth can there be any good?*"

⁷ See Study of Gospels, p. 405.

Philip saith unto him, Come and see." For as Galilee was ignoble to a proverb, and distinguished for no prophecy, so that the Pharisees said confidently to Nicodemus, "Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet;" so even in Galilee was Nazareth ignoble and obscure. Nathanael, though a person of great simplicity, yet seems diligently to have studied the Scriptures; as the words of Philip seem to intimate, in referring at once to the Law and the Prophets; and also the reply of Nathanael, in adducing of himself that very same objection which the Pharisees afterwards made. St. Chrysostom, Cyril, and others, suppose him learned in the Law, and St. Augustin suggests that this his learning was the reason why he was not chosen by our Lord to be an Apostle, notwithstanding the exceeding high testimony which He gives him, because Christ would choose "the weak things of the world to confound the strong." The modern opinion, that Nathanael was an Apostle and the same as Bartholomew, is supported more by the reasons alleged for it than by any weight of patristic or early authority. But these reasons are certainly great: that the other Evangelists mention Bartholomew but make no mention of Nathanael; whereas St. John, who mentions Nathanael, makes no mention of Bartholomew. That the other Evangelists, in mentioning Bartholomew, place him together with Philip, as Nathanael is here found; that there is no mention made of the call of Bartholomew, unless it be this of Nathanael, which places him together with Philip; that Bartholomew being merely a patronymic, he must also have been known under some other name: that St. John in the last chapter mentions Nathanael among Apostles; so that both at first and at last he is found among them. There is not sufficient evidence of his learning, nor any adequate proof

that it would of itself have prevented his being chosen an Apostle, any more than St. Paul: not such, at all events, as to outweigh this probability of his having been one of the Twelve, although if the contrary had been proved these reasons would have accounted for the circumstance. Add to which, that in a question of names and persons, ancient writers are not so much to be depended on as in matters of faith and concerning truth, where piety and wisdom are of avail in the discernment of it: the searching spirit connected with modern infidelity has had this incidental good, towards ascertaining the less material and external points of Scripture, which ancient simplicity had not.

“Jesus seeth Nathanael coming unto Him, and saith concerning him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.”—one who is not in name only a descendant of Israel, but who is in heart like Israel of old, “a plain man,” and without guile. In like manner, as of Zaccheus the Publican, our Lord said that he was “a son of Abraham;” for as faithful men only are truly the children of faithful Abraham, so guileless men only are truly Israelites; “for they are not all Israel which are of Israel: neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children.” And it may be, that as the Jews would not have allowed Zaccheus the Publican to be a son of Abraham at all after the flesh:—saying, “He hath gone to be a guest with a man that is a sinner;”—in like manner that perhaps Nathanael was not altogether an Israelite according to the letter. For this, as in the former case, would afford an additional force to our Lord’s words, as calling him an “Israelite indeed” who by some was not allowed to be an Israelite at all. And if so, in this also might be secretly intimated the call of the Gentiles. *“Nathanael,”*—whether or not he was now near enough to understand or hear our

Lord's words, at all events perceived that He was speaking of himself, and describing him, as One Who had an intimate knowledge of him:—Nathanael "*saith unto Him, Whence knowest Thou me?*" Nathanael answers, not as if pleased with the description of himself, nor does he even address Christ as "Master," but all his expressions are of surprise and curiosity rather than of admiration or worship. "*Jesus answered and said unto him, Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree I saw thee.*" "He inquired as man," says Chrysostom, "but Christ answered as God." On hearing the words,—which came upon him like an electric shock, or like lightning, from the suddenness of the light, in which as by an Eye on the heart he stood revealed;—he was, like St. Thomas on another occasion, overwhelmed with astonishment; and found himself all at once in the presence of God. For to that God alone he had probably opened his heart under the fig-tree, Who thus showed Himself conscious of his deepest thoughts, which had never been expressed to ear of man; and therefore was well able to speak of him as a guileless man, like Israel of old. For evidently what had passed under the fig-tree was of a nature most secret, and connected probably with God and His Christ, from the astonishment and admiration expressed by Nathanael. Indeed, it may be asked, what had he to do here on the banks of the Jordan as a disciple of the Baptist, but the works of confession and repentance? In these, therefore, he was probably then engaged. St. Chrysostom, however, supposes that what had taken place under the fig-tree was the conversation of Nathanael with Philip. But others do not so understand it, and certainly the account seems to imply that it was previous to the call of Philip. "O Israel without guile," says St. Augustin on this passage,

“whosoever thou art, O people living by faith, before I called thee through My Apostles, when thou wert under the shadow of death, when thou sawest not Me, I saw thee!” The fig-tree he allegorically explains as the shadow of death, the leaves with which our fallen first parents were clad : but Gregory considers it to represent the shade of the Jewish Law. “*Nathanael answered and saith unto Him, Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel.*” Augustin, Cyril, and others, think that he confessed Christ the Son of God in the highest sense, as the heart-searching God. But not so St. Chrysostom, who thinks that although he confessed Him as the Son of God, yet that it was not in that highest sense in which St. Peter did three years later, and perhaps St. Thomas at the last. For St. Peter had previously confessed Him such, and so did the Centurion at His death, in the sense perhaps in which the Messiah was supposed to be “the Son of God ;” and in the sense which Nathanael intends, for he here adds “the King of Israel.” And our Lord in His answer—of greater things hereafter, and of Angels being subject unto Him—indicates His kingdom to be a Heavenly one, by which the Son of Man would have all power and authority given Him in Heaven, and on earth. “*Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou ? thou shalt see greater things than these.*” Thou hast as yet seen nothing, seen no miracle wrought, but a word hath found thee out : the pure in heart have the blessing to see God ; and the single eye readily discerns Him at once, for “if thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light” Such therefore have eyes to see and ears to hear ; and if Israel was peculiar among the Patriarchs for his discerning of Angels and of God, the simple-hearted who is his

descendant in truth, shall see the very fulfilment of what Jacob saw in a Prophetic vision, when he beheld "a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to Heaven; and behold the Angels of God ascending and descending on it." *"And He saith unto him, Hereafter shall ye see the Heavens opened, and the Angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."* Not only thou, but all who have eyes to see shall behold the kingdom of Heaven on earth; the tabernacle of God come to be with men: and such power given unto Christ in His kingdom, that Angels and principalities and powers shall be made subject unto Him, ascending to Heaven with prayers, and descending with blessings: the highest Angels who see His face shall minister to His little ones below. And as on every other occasion which may be said to be the coming in of His kingdom, as at His Nativity, and Temptation, and Resurrection; so especially at His Ascension, and at His Coming to Judgment, shall ascending and descending Angels be seen. In many ways is it fulfilled, that "hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of Power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven;" and as He adds on another occasion, "and all the holy Angels with Him*."

The whole of this introduction of the disciples to our Lord is remarkable for its extremely quiet, and what might be called domestic character. It is all, as it were, characteristic of Him Who "shall not strive, nor cry, neither shall any man hear His Voice in the streets." Much is of the nature of human incident, and apparently fortuitous contingency: natural ties of discipleship, of kindred, and of friendship, are the moving causes, as in any circumstance of ordinary occurrence; and all this in

* See Study of Gospels, P. iii. § 12, P. v. § 4

order, as with noiseless hands, to lay the everlasting foundations of the City of God. The holy Baptist in his ordinary teaching, intimates to some disciples the presence of the Lamb of God, and that by way of hint or incidental mention, "as he looked on Jesus" while He passed by. They introduce themselves to His notice, and go in silence to His abode, and are received by Him as a man receives his friends. The door closes on them, they are with Christ, but what passes is unknown. Then the coming of the great Apostle is through the call of kindred, the natural tie is the apparent cause of his coming. Then Philip also is called as being one of the same city, and he naturally hastens to his own friend: friendship does now what kindred did before; a few words are recorded, and such is the beginning of the Church whose top reaches Heaven; the grain of mustard seed is scattered as it were to the mercy of the winds, till it finds fit place to take root. But it is all by Him without Whose knowledge not a sparrow falleth to the ground: by Him Who hath the times and seasons in His own Hand, and also the hearts of men: Who calleth the stars by their names, and they answer, Here we be: or with the infant Samuel, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth."

SECTION IX

THE MARRIAGE IN CANA OF GALILEE

THE last discourse mentioned of our Lord was addressed to an inhabitant of Cana in Galilee; and although nothing is said of the connexion these two circumstances may have had with each other, yet we cannot but notice that

the event now about to be recorded took place in Cana. It is mentioned that our Lord was then about to set out for this country of Galilee; and it appears that those whom He had now called were with Him on this occasion at Cana, and spoken of as His disciples. And indeed His call to Philip is mentioned in connexion with this His return to Galilee; which renders it probable that Philip became the companion of His journey; and as Philip was in such close intercourse with Nathanael, we may suppose that Nathanael also was with Him. But whether this introduction of Nathanael had any reference to what immediately after occurs at Cana, is not apparent. The narrative rather suggests some connexion with the family of our Lord's Mother, who was present at the marriage. Whether she had been with Him on the banks of the Jordan, and they were now returning; or whether after His return they had come up from Nazareth; or that she was there before, does not appear. On the next time of our Lord's coming to Galilee and Nazareth, He seems first to have come to Cana; and from thence on both occasions to Capernaum. But Cana was not far from Nazareth, a little beyond, about four miles: after crossing the hills to the north of Nazareth, and then turning to the west, you come to Cana. There are circumstances which connect it with St. Mary's family; for our Lord's brethren are mentioned immediately afterwards; and Simon, the son of Cleopas and Mary, who is numbered among our Lord's brethren, had his designation of the Canaanite, a name which St. Jerome thinks that he derived from this place, as the Canaanitish woman is supposed to be so called from the other Cana in the borders of Tyre and Sidon. It may be noticed, that it is not said that our Lord's Mother was invited to the marriage, as it is stated of our Lord

and His disciples, but that "the Mother of Jesus was there;" she might have been staying there previously at the house of her sister Mary, if she, as it appears, lived at Cana: and the blessed Virgin's giving directions to the servants has the appearance of one thus at home in that family, rather than if she were a mere guest or stranger there. The legendary story of its being the intended marriage of St. John to the niece of the Virgin, indicates some grounds for believing there was a domestic connexion of this sort. And the supposed residence of Joachim and Anna, the parents of St. Mary, is still pointed out in a place nearer to Cana than to Nazareth. But these circumstances, which connect our Lord's coming to Cana with the supposition of St. Mary and her family being there, seem in some degree to weaken the argument for any connexion with the call of Nathanael of Cana. And yet it is easy to imagine a case in which both circumstances would be combined.

It is not evident what this "third day" of the marriage is dated from: one opinion is, that it was the third day after His return from the Temptation in the wilderness; but the distance and intervening circumstances will scarcely admit of this: others think that it was on the third day of His coming into Galilee; but there is no notice of His having already come there, from which the third day could be numbered: some, that it was on the same day in which He called Philip and Nathanael, which was on the third day the Evangelist had distinctly specified after the Baptist's answer to the Pharisees, supposing that St. Peter and St. Andrew were called on the same day: others, that it was on the third day after our Lord had been pointed out as "the Lamb of God" to the two disciples. The more simple and natural way of

taking it seems to be different from either of these, that it was merely "on the third day" after the circumstance the Evangelist last spoke of. He had been detailing with circumstantial accuracy what had occurred on three successive days, beginning each account by repeating the same words, "on the morrow," or "on the next day⁹," "on the morrow¹," "on the morrow²." But the distance from Bethabara to Cana was such, that it could scarcely have occurred on the following day, and nothing is mentioned of what took place on the journey: after an interval therefore of a day, the Evangelist again proceeds with his narrative, resuming it not with the words "on the next day," as he had done before, but "on the third day."

"*And on the third day,*" after what was last recorded, "*there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee.*" Bede interprets the third day mystically, after the Patriarchal and Prophetic age had passed, and now, on the third day, the Evangelical dispensation was commencing in this deeply prefigurative and typical marriage-feast. But the third day seems the great and appointed day for the manifestation of God. Thus in the giving out of the Law, "the third day" is very emphatically and repeatedly mentioned—"Sanctify them to-day and to-morrow, and be ready against the third day; for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people;"—words which might now have been spoken to the disciples—"Sanctify yourselves, for on the third day Christ will manifest His glory to you."

"*And the Mother of Jesus was there.*" This seems to indicate the reason of our Lord's being invited, as her being there was the cause of the miracle, "*And both Jesus and His disciples were called to the marriage.*" He went

⁹ John i. 29.

¹ Ib. 35.

² Ib. 43.

to the marriage, as St. Augustin and others say, to hallow marriage by His Presence ; for the virgin state was consecrated in His own Person and in His Mother ; and also as a gracious act of humility ; the failure of the wine seems to indicate it to have been at the house of poor persons, unless that might have been owing, as some suggest, to the unexpected influx of guests on our Lord's account ; but of this there is no proof or intimation. "*And when the wine failed, the Mother of Jesus saith unto Him, They have no wine.*" From the watchful consideration and contemplativeness so often seen in the blessed Virgin, we may conclude there was more intended in this than a casual observation : and that owing, perhaps, to some of the things that had lately occurred, she was at this time looking for some manifestation of our Lord. The multiplying of the widow's oil, and of the barley loaves by Elisha, and other incidents in the Old Testament, may have occurred to her mind ; or she may have been divinely inspired to put the inquiry, scarcely herself conscious of the great consequences which might ensue. But there were two circumstances which on this occasion might preclude such a manifestation : that our Lord's time, when according to this dispensation He would disclose His Godhead by miracles, was not yet arrived ; and that in the previous mention of Him in conjunction with His Mother in St. Luke, and also on subsequent occasions, there was a marked intention of separating His Divine Power and the operation of it from any interference of His human Mother. "*Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee ? My time is not yet come.*" Intimating by these words that such a miracle, if performed, is but in the overflowings of His bounties, which always pass over the limits prescribed to them ; as in the

mercies vouchsafed to the Gentiles before their call ; in the aboundings of His grace beyond His own appointed ordinances ; and according to the bounteous measures by which God giveth. As in another case—"I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel," and "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs;" these are words which in like manner indicate hesitation and delay, while at the same time He grants the request over and beyond the laws of His dispensation. Thus in this instance there are two points of view in which His graciousness exceeds the strict laws of the economy ; first, as flowing over the three years of His manifestation ; and secondly, as granted to His Mother ; for neither for the support of His own suffering humanity, when He hungered, nor for His kindred in the flesh, did He suspend or supersede the natural laws of God. But He granted it here to her suggestion not as a maternal request, but to the faith indicated thereby : and thus did He work the first of His miracles in testimony to the pre-eminence of her faith, not out of deference to human relationship. This His mother in her deep observation seemed to understand : "*His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever He may say unto you, do it.*" And here, notwithstanding the cloud that veils the blessed Mother from our view, she breaks forth as the type of the Church, teaching obedience to Christ as the beginning of all our hopes ; as if saying to us all, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it," and leave to Him the issue. May it not be that when the "time" is fully "come," the Church shall thus ask in faith ; and on the obedience of her ministers to His command Christ shall work miracles, converting poor earthly elements into the Sacramental riches of His kingdom ?

St. Chrysostom supposes that the cause of our Lord's

answer, which apparently conveys reproof, might be that there was something of human feeling which dictated the request of the blessed Virgin; wishing thereby to ingratiate herself with her hosts, and to render herself more illustrious through her Son; as when His brethren said unto Him, "Show Thyself to the world;" and that this His reply signified something of the same kind as on two other occasions: the one when a woman said unto Him, "Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and the paps which Thou hast sucked;" He replied, "Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it³;" and on another occasion, when they interrupted Him by saying, "Thy mother and Thy brethren stand without, desiring to see Thee:" to which He answered, "My mother and My brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it." Wishing to indicate that no human connexion with Him will be of any avail to stand in the place of obedience to God. For if of itself it had profited the Virgin, it would have profited the Jews, for Christ was their kindred according to the flesh: it would have profited the city in which He was born; it would have profited His brethren⁴. St. Augustin in like manner explains it, that this miracle she seems to ask for is the work of God; but in that He was God He had no human mother. She was the mother of His human weakness, not of His Divine power. That a time would come in which He would show Himself to be hers, in which He would acknowledge her as His mother, in the time of His suffering humanity on the cross. Then would He suffer and die for her, and acknowledge her in His dying; but this His hour was not yet come⁵. One consideration

³ Luke xi. 27, and viii. 21.

⁴ In Joan. Hom. xxi.

⁵ See in Joan. Tr. viii. 9.

which gives a sanction to this opinion is this, that this hour of our Lord's death is the only occasion when He speaks to her, or concerning her, without something that sounds like apparent reproof or derogation: I say apparent, for as His filial love and obedience was doubtless the perfection of all filial piety, so it is of course for our sakes and not for her that it so divinely occurs and is written, indicating, unquestionably, that there would exist in the latter and evil day the *development* of something in an opposite direction to that in which Scripture and the early Fathers led the way.

The words with which He first seems to decline, and His afterwards acting according to the request, render the occasion similar to that other before alluded to, when His brethren said, "If Thou do these things, show Thyself to the world;" but He answered, "My time is not yet come;" and again, "I go not yet up to this feast; for My time is not yet full come."—But afterwards He goes up, as it were, in secret. These words of our Lord may also be connected with another mystery: at this feast our Lord appears to be taking leave of His Mother, in order to be united to His Church; for this His union with His Church seems to be typified by this marriage-feast. He seems, therefore, to be Himself doing in mystery that which He soon after called upon His disciples to do literally, to leave father and mother and all that they had, and to cleave unto Him. It was this which was so often prefigured of old, both at the first institution of marriage in Paradise⁶, and throughout the Law—as when the Israelite married the captive woman, after her being cleansed from pollution, and having "bewailed her father and mother⁷;" a type of which the Psalm speaks

⁶ Eph. xxxi. 31, 32.

⁷ Deut. xxi. 13.

“Hearken, O daughter, and consider, incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house.” At this time, therefore, our Lord may be acting with a mysterious reference to that which He called upon His Church and His disciples to do, in taking leave of His Mother, and accompanying it with this gracious act of condescension.

“*Now there were set there six water-vessels of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews,*”—to serve for the purpose of their frequent lustrations and washings, for, as St. Mark says, “All the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not,”—“*containing two or three firkins apiece.*” These vessels were therefore of very large dimensions for any quantity of wine, and the mention of it indicates that the miracle must have left abundance more than was consumed, as in the two miracles of the loaves—for in those cases, also, the great quantity remaining over is particularly specified; and in the widow’s oil, multiplied by Elisha, the abundance is very marked—for God giveth not by measure in the dispensation of the Spirit. His mercies abound and run over, and there is much left, of which there is none found meet to partake, while “His compassions fail not,” and there is “much room” at the table of His bounties. These six water-pots St. Augustin mystically explains as the six ages of the world, which Christ orders to be filled with water; for they are by Him filled with prophecy, and He converts the same into the new wine of His Gospel; for in them Christ was hidden till His word commands it to be drawn forth. “How did our hearts burn within us,” said the two disciples, “while He opened unto us the Scriptures?”—while He converted, as it were, the water of the Old Testament, and they tasted of the new wine. And the

"two or three" measures which they each contained, St. Augustin considers to indicate the Ever-blessed Trinity, of Whom sometimes Two are only mentioned, and sometimes Three. But whether Two or Three are specified, it is One and the Same in all—Two or Three in each. In illustration of this opinion we may remember that the "two or three witnesses" in Holy Scripture are explained of the Blessed Trinity⁸. Or, says the same writer, it may signify the different people of the world which fill up these six ages; being two if we consider them as Jews and Gentiles; three if we class them as the three races descended from Noah⁹.

"Jesus saith unto them, Fill the water-pots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And He saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear it to the governor of the feast. And they bare it." The whole account intimates ready and instant obedience, as in that description of perfect obedience given by the Centurion—"I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." The old wine was being exhausted; the old dispensation seemed to fail from the corruptions of the Pharisees, which had come to the dregs: but Christ comes not to destroy, but to fulfil the Law, by perfect obedience; and then to convert the obedience and righteousness of the natural man, which is but as water, unstable and unprofitable, into that love which is the true fulfilment of the commandment. "They filled them to the brim;" for not one jot or tittle of the Law shall fail, being perfected in His servants. *"But when the governor of the feast had tasted the water that had become wine, and knew not whence it was,"* for he was quite ignorant of the miracle, which was so astonishing to

⁸ See Study of Gospels, P. iii. § 4

⁹ In Joan. Tr. ix.

others, who had in an instant found the water they had carried to be wine; "*but the servants that drew the water knew*"—having it disclosed to them in reward for their faithful obedience. As St. Ambrose says in his hymn on the Epiphany—

“Or is it vessels flowing
With waters made divine?
The servant drew them, knowing
He ne’er had fill’d with wine,
On that great marriage day.

“He saw the waters taking
Th’ inebriating glow;
Their former selves forsaking,
Changed elements, they flow,
And, flowing, catch the ray.”

“*The Governor of the Feast,*” on tasting the wine, “*calleth the Bridegroom, and saith unto him;*” words worthy of sacred record, for the Wine had already filled his mind with a new and Divine spirit, which was not his own, and he began to speak things with higher meaning than he knew, and saith unto the Bridegroom, “*Every man first of all setteth forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse. Thou hast preserved the good wine until now.*” How great is this Bridegroom, who had these gracious and high words spoken unto him! But he is silent; like Melchizedek of old, when he brought forth the bread and wine, he comes and goes, and says nothing. But the words arrest and rivet our attention the more, from this very silence, and from the emphatic and striking manner in which the observation is uttered, and then left. It seems as if all this occasion of the marriage-feast, and the circumstances of the miracle, were but recorded as subservient to this

one speech which is thus left unexplained, and to this mention of the Bridegroom of whom and by whom nothing is spoken. We cannot read it without secret thoughts of wonder, as if touching on some hidden mystery. Blessed Bridegroom, who art thou? "every man" doeth one thing, but thou another; not as man giveth, givest thou; for "every man" giveth first that which is best, and then the worse. This wine of thine savoureth not of humanity. Divine Stranger, Who art Thou, and from whence is Thy Wine? Every man setteth forth at first that which is good, and then when nature itself is sated that which is worse. This is ever the tale of man, and of all that appertaineth to his humanity; his history is comprised in these words, in this account of bright promise ending in disappointment. That which was once morning hasteneth in shades to a close: the year that was so bright in the spring drops all its beauty as it declines to winter; man that was so full of promise as he went on towards manhood, passes on to days when his "strength is but labour and sorrow;" "the good wine" wanes till it becomes insipid and cold at last, and the taste is gone that delighted in it. So is it with all things human; the account of them under every diversity is the repetition of the same story: we go on from day to day, and from year to year, finding all things that pleased the natural man to decay before us; even if the dregs of past pleasures are not embittered with remorse. Those objects that soothed us once, the most innocent delights, early friendships, and love of kindred, change as we advance onward, lose favour in our eyes, or make themselves wings and fly away before us. And therefore all the description of "every man" is vanity. "Can thy servant taste what I eat or what

I drink? Can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? Wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden¹." This is the close of all things earthly, and the answer to be given at last when man offereth to bestow his best gifts. But thy pleasures, mysterious Bridegroom, wane not, thy love and thy delights, and thy beauty, and the wine of those that are at thy table, know not old age; but as they verge onward to the close of mortal things, they put on brighter hopes and fuller immortality. As that Bride which represented the Church of old, "Thou hast shown more kindness at the latter end than at the beginning²." Thy flowers are flowers of Paradise, which fade not. Surely thou givest not as "every man" giveth. Marvellous Bridegroom, whoever Thou art, let my portion be with Thee! the water of Thy washings is better than the wine of man; this Thy Wine is that "which maketh glad the heart of man;" and not that only, but "which cheereth God and man³." Let me find a place at Thy table, though the meanest there; if such be Thy Wine, the Oil of Thine anointing shall make the countenance cheerful with immortal youth; and the Bread that Thou suppliest is strength indeed: and the crumbs that fall from Thy table are better than the feasts that "every man" giveth. Immortal Bridegroom, let me be on the watch when Thou comest, and with my lamp burning, that I may go in with Thee to the wedding; lest the door should be shut, and Thou from within shalt say, Thou knowest me not. Mysterious Bridegroom, Thy ways are the ways of God and not of man. Thou givest as God giveth, as God giveth to His chosen, and as all things that are Divine.

If the history of man is contained in this description

¹ 2 Sam. xix. 35.

² Ruth iii. 10.

³ Judges ix. 13.

of the manner in which "every man" giveth, so the ways of God are comprised in this, that He keepeth "the good wine to the last." After the desolation of Adam, and the heavy yoke of the Law, He gives the better Paradise of His Gospel, and the easy yoke of Christ: to the earthly Canaan He adds His spiritual kingdom of promise; and to this His kingdom on earth He adds that which is in Heaven. Thus all things in Him are ever improving to the close: the wilderness is converted into Canaan, and Canaan into a better country, and the earthly Jerusalem into a "City which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God:" the washings of the Law are converted into the laver of His Spirit; the temporal shadows into the Eternal Substance; the water at the Feast of Tabernacles speaks no more of the waters of the desert, but of the overflowing gifts of the Holy Ghost; the old commandments are converted into the new law of love, of loving as Christ loved us; the six laws of duty to man, which were but as water before, are turned into this love like that of Christ; and the Blessed Trinity is in the fulfilment of each: the Bread and Wine of earth are changed into His Body and His Blood, multiplied sevenfold, running over and much remaining. Earthly affections He converts into Heavenly: the sorrow that worketh death into the godly sorrow which bringeth life: and the joys of sense to those of the Spirit; and these spiritual consolations here below are an earnest of good things yet to come, and of those pleasures which are at God's right hand. Thus Thou givest not as man giveth. O Bridegroom unknown! yet well known, and Whom to know is life! give me to thirst after Thy Cup, that I may be filled⁴. They that

⁴ Matt. v. 6.

drink of Thee "shall yet be thirsty⁵." The relish of Thy wine increases with fruition ; and with that fruition shall they yet be filled, so that they at length shall thirst no more, but it shall be unto them a well within them, "springing up unto everlasting life." For "with Thee is the well of life." Oh give me to love Thy new wine, that I turn not again to the dead rites of the Law, and say that the old wine is better. "My strength and my heart faileth" me, human nature hastens to be dried up, and withered like the leathern "bottle in the smoke." And if I be such, and still enveloped in the unregenerate man, the New Wine will burst the bottles, will ruin me, and be spilt on the ground. But may I be clothed all over with that wedding garment, which is the New Man, that I be not rejected from Thy table. "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!" Many are they that are called by Thee, for Thou givest to all men liberally, and upbraidest not : but few are they that deign to come, and few are they that are chosen of Thee.

But Thou art He that in the old world converteth the watery dews and rains from Heaven into the juice of the grape. Thou art He that in the new world converteth the tears of repentance into Thine own atoning Blood ; that their robes may be washed in the Blood of the Lamb ; and become meet to be their wedding garment at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Thou art He that didst meet Israel of old at the Red Sea : and now at these Red Waters art come to claim Thine own Israel again. As man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, so hast Thou left Thy Father which is in Heaven, to come to us. For why should it be said,

⁵ Ecclus. xxiv. 21.

that Adam was laid asleep in order that Eve should be taken from his side, were it not to set before us this great mystery? Thou art that Bridegroom Who by Thine own Blood hast bought Thy Bride, and givest her to drink of the Wine of Thine own Immortality; for Thou art Thyself the true Vine. And surely this governor of the Feast can be no other than that "friend of the Bridegroom," who "rejoiceth greatly to hear the Bridegroom's voice," and has his "joy fulfilled." And his joy is indeed no earthly joy, for he rejoices that he must decrease; and that the Bridegroom is of Heaven, and must increase for ever. "Blessed is he that is called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!" The friend of the Bridegroom even now hath declared Who is that Lamb, "the Lamb of God," seen by the banks of Jordan; the Lamb that shall lead them to the living fountains of water. And Nathanael too, the guileless Israelite, hath already seen more than Israel did of old; he hath seen the Heavens opened, and the Angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. He hath seen better things than Jacob did at those wells of old, where he met his bride; for those were waters of contention, but these of peace: the waters of which it is said, "the streams thereof shall make glad the City of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High."

Here therefore, at these waters of Cana, seems to be our Lord's first meeting with His Church; the first miracle wrought through faith in His power at the typical marriage-feast. And it is remarkable how often the Patriarchs of old were affianced to their Betrothed at the wells of water, as if prefiguring the union betwixt Christ and His Church at this Beersheba, the well of the oath, and the Baptismal Covenant. By the well Rebekah was found by the

servant of Abraham, whom the Angel of the Lord had led thither ; at the well Rachel was met by Jacob ; and at the well the daughter of Jethro was first seen by Moses ; at the well is the affiancing of the Bridegroom and the Bride ; at the well of Samaria our Lord first receives the Church of the Gentiles. Perhaps it may be from some mysterious significancy of this kind, that this Gospel not only abounds with expressions of Light and Life, but also with the mention of Water. As if of this Evangelist, or of those who are with our Lord in this Gospel, it had been said, "Who going through the vale of misery, use it for a well, and the pools are filled with water. They shall go from strength to strength." From the waters of Bethabara to the water-vessels of Cana ; from the water-vessels of Cana to the well of Samaria ; from the well of Samaria to the sea of Galilee ; from the sea of Galilee to the pool of Bethesda ; and from thence to the waters at the Feast of Tabernacles ; and from thence to the pool of Siloam ; and then to the washing of His disciples' feet ; and at the close of all, after the Resurrection, to His last converse with them at the sea of Galilee. Such are the indications of His goings Whose footsteps are in the vast deep ; the noiseless and secret ways of Him "Who layeth the beams of His chambers in the waters." For all these are in St. John's Gospel.

"*This the beginning of the miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee ;*" and blessed indeed was this Cana that was privileged to see Him, and the first of His miracles,—Cana which thrust Him not from her as Nazareth, nor was found in His declarations of "woe," as Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida ! St. Chrysostom thinks that our Lord worked no miracle before His Baptism ; and this we should infer both from the silence and the allusions of Holy Scripture : for although His answers to the doctors

in the Temple had created astonishment, and His speech to Nathanael something even more than astonishment ; yet these are not exactly classed among the miracles He wrought. “*And*” thus He “*manifested forth His glory* :” for these His works were the manifestation of His Godhead, as He Himself to the Jews appealed to this testimony, and pointed out the same to the disciples of John ; and faith as the grain of mustard seed was already kindled thereby. “*And His disciples believed on Him* ;”—those who were to be His future disciples, whom He had been lately inviting to Him on the banks of the Jordan, and perhaps in addition to these those who were designated His brethren, some of whom were probably connected with this place, and afterwards His disciples. “*After this He went down to Capernaum* ;” the expression applied afterwards to Capernaum, “*thou that art exalted to Heaven*,” one might have supposed to have been derived from its position, and the term “*going down*” is sometimes applied to a place nearer the sea ; but in this case it is a continual descent from Cana to Capernaum ; and the expression of “*coming down*” from Cana to Capernaum is used afterwards by the nobleman, whose son was sick at the latter place. He went down, “*Himself, and His mother, and His brethren, and His disciples*. *And there they continued not many days*.” It may be observed, that when our Lord’s Mother is spoken of, there is no mention of St. Joseph ; and this is the case on all occasions, subsequent to the circumstances recorded in St. Luke, when our Lord was twelve years of age ; whereas before that time he is never omitted with the Virgin Mother. This adds a great probability to the received opinion that he was dead : indeed, even at our Lord’s birth he is usually represented as advanced in years.

What the motive of our Lord may have been in going to Capernaum at this time it may be fruitless to inquire. St. Chrysostom indeed supposes, that it was in order to leave His mother and brethren there, previous to His going to Jerusalem : and that He stays there for a few days out of respect to her ; and then, having relinquished her, He again works miracles : for here and in other places he seems to think that our Lord carefully set aside His mother from any intervention with His Divine power and ministry. But one does not see why He should have gone to Capernaum for this purpose, rather than to Nazareth. It may have been from some private incidental reason ; we find Peter's wife's mother residing there ; and perhaps St. Peter himself. Or the Evangelist may have merely wished to record His first going to a place so public, and afterwards the chief abode of His ministry ; and that our Lord's reason for doing so may have had some reference to it. The next miracle which He performed in Galilee was for a person of that place ; and he then complained to the nobleman of Capernaum, whose son he restored, " Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe : " from which we may suppose that it was His custom to endeavour to draw men unto Him by other means, before He manifested His power. Perhaps, therefore, His coming there now, for a few days before the Passover, was designed for the preparing of that City for His subsequent reception, and it may be with an eye to this very nobleman, who on His next coming " believed." For as our Lord required faith for the working of His miracles, and " faith cometh by hearing," it would seem as if some preparation of the heart was necessary before the manifestation of miracles. And in this miracle at Cana it may be observed, that there had been exactly that previous preparation, both in the disciples who

witnessed it, for they had now been with our Lord a few days, and in the blessed Virgin whose faith obtained the miracle.

St. Chrysostom seems to suppose from this account, that our Lord's Baptism occurred but a few days before the Passover. But of course we must include the forty days of our Lord's temptation in the wilderness, which intervened. And if these things were mysteriously regulated by times and seasons to great signification, it may have been that the term of fifty days, or seven weeks, intervened after His Baptism, before His manifestation at Jerusalem. For Baptism is in some sense analogous to Resurrection. And as the forty days in the wilderness, at the end of which Angels ministered unto Him, had a correspondence with the forty days of our Lord's stay upon earth after the Resurrection, at the end of which Angels attended His Ascent to Heaven ; so it may be that the ten ensuing days, and in all the fifty days, might have a correspondence with the period of the sending down of the Holy Ghost. For during these ten days, our Lord says that His "time is not yet fully come ;" as also between His Ascension and Pentecost there is a pause, in which they wait till they shall be "endued with power from on High." Nor is there wanting an analogy between the two events ; for at Jerusalem during the Feast He worked "many miracles," and drove the buyers and sellers out of the Temple : and thus also when the Holy Ghost came down, it was with great manifestation of miracles : and in the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira, a driving of the buyers and sellers out of the Temple.

PART III

The First Passover

“Burnt-offerings, and sacrifice for sin, hast Thou not required ; then said I, Lo, I come.”

SECTION I

THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE

“**A**ND *the Passover of the Jews was at hand ;*”—the Jewish nation had now passed away, together with their city, when this Evangelist wrote, and it is no longer “the Passover,” or “the Lord’s Passover,” as called elsewhere, but “the Passover of the Jews.” “*And Jesus went up to Jerusalem ;*” and there at once takes upon Him His public ministry, by cleansing the House of His Father. There seems a particular reason why St. John should introduce this circumstance ; for the other Evangelists had recorded a charge made against Him at His death, of His having spoken of destroying the Temple, and His rebuilding it in three days ; a very remarkable prophecy to be then brought forward, but yet there is no mention of the occasion on which our Lord delivered it. It is this therefore which St. John now proceeds to supply. But

the whole circumstance is so similar to that which has been considered in other places, that there will be the less to say here upon the subject ¹.

"And He found in the Temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money-changers sitting," as in the market-place. These sacrifices indeed, for which they were designed, were appointed of God, but by their conduct they were frustrating every object of reverence, for which these modes of worship were given. Thus Moses, the meekest of men, breaks in pieces the Tables of stone which God had given. "Sacrifices," says St. Augustin, "were granted to that people on account of their carnality and stony heart, by which they were prevented from falling away to idols²." Yet still these sacrificial rites, granted on account of hardness of heart, and preventives of future wickedness, were written on as with the finger of God Who gave them; replete with mysterious prophecy and wisdom; and made shadows of good things to come. By this action therefore our Lord is expressing more than words—the hidden purpose of His mysterious coming: "Burnt-offerings, and sacrifice for sin, hast Thou not required; then said I, Lo, I come." This however was not the primary intention of that action, and but one of its manifold meanings. That covetousness in the Church, and sacrilegious dealing, will bring down the ultimate judgment of God, seems not improbable; and without entering with Origen into mystical expositions of different parts of this transaction—as that the "oxen" signify the Ministers of Christ; the "dove," His Holy Spirit; and the "sheep," His flock; which will be bought

¹ See The Holy Week, pp. 91, 102. See The Passion, pp. 105, 139. See Study of Gospels, pp. 191, 192.

² In Joan. Tr. x. 4.

and sold by those that traffic in the Church—yet we may reasonably apprehend that this action does typify some great future judgment in a manner unknown to us. *“And having made a scourge of small cords, He drove them all out of the Temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew the tables. And to those that sold doves He said, Take these things hence; make not My Father’s house an house of merchandise.”* Still greater was the condemnation and vehemence of Divine zeal shown three years later; for, as St. Chrysostom observes, He then says, “Ye have made it,” not “an house of merchandise,” but “a den of thieves.” But on this occasion alone are the “sheep and oxen” mentioned, and “the scourge of small cords.” Here our Lord speaks of the Temple as “My Father’s house;” but on the subsequent occasion, as if in fuller manifestation of Himself, it is of “My house” that He speaks, adducing the Scriptural Prophecies so full of deep meaning, as explained elsewhere. Here, indeed, was there at once a significative fulfilment of what the Holy Baptist had said, “His fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor.” And it may be observed on these occasions, that our Lord ventures to exasperate them at that place where they were most violent and powerful; so great was His transporting zeal for the honour of God. In like manner it may be noticed that His miracles, which took place on the Sabbath day, were at places and times, where they would most offend the carnal Jews: although, for their sakes, He so much avoided persecution. For the holiness of Christ knows not expediency. And St. Chrysostom thinks that He now exposed Himself to danger in doing so, in order to add weight to His authority, when at other times

He should set aside their perverse observance of the Law.

"And the disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of Thine House hath eaten Me up ;" and we might add also from another Psalm, "My zeal hath even consumed Me, because Mine enemies have forgotten Thy words." They remembered the Psalm ; and surely, if this expression in that Psalm arrested their attention, we cannot but suppose that they were struck with the resemblance of the description given in the whole of that Psalm ; and that our Lord must, even at this time, have appeared to them in the character there represented, as "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief ;" as one "despised and rejected of men." For the very words they introduce are, in that Psalm, preceded by an apparent reference to His having left His brethren, and appearing in His Father's house, "For Thy sake have I suffered reproach : shame hath covered My face. I am become a stranger unto My brethren ; and an alien unto My mother's children. For the zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up ; and the rebukes of them that rebuked Thee are fallen upon Me." Before which He had said, "I am weary of My crying, My throat is dried, Mine eyes fail while I wait for My God." And surely if this is a description of nothing else in the life which our Lord had now led, the forty days in the wilderness must have left scars of suffering which too plainly indicated "the Man of sorrows." Nor does it seem probable that the disciples would have been so much impressed with the fulfilment of those few words, unless the character in which they were spoken resembled Christ in His humiliation, even now.

Surely this pattern of zeal is for all Christians to follow,

and in which it may be said, "put forth thy full strength, but He will far exceed;" for they can never equal His adorable example of zeal for the holiness of God's House of Prayer. "Who," says St. Augustin, "is eaten up with zeal for the House of the Lord? He who, when he observeth any thing wrong therein, rests not until it be amended: and if he cannot amend, then he mourns in silence." And that this zeal should be rather shown within the Church, than in quitting it, he adds, "The grain is not shaken out of the floor; it endures the chaff; that it may enter into the barn, when the chaff shall have been separated from it. If thou art the grain, be not shaken out of the threshing-floor, before thou cometh to the barn; lest thou be gathered by the birds, which are the Powers of the air, and are on the watch to seize what cometh from the threshing-floor, but cannot unless it first be cast out from thence. Let every Christian be eaten up with zeal for the House of God, of which he is himself a member. For thine own house is not more to thee than that in which thou hast eternal salvation. Thou enterest thine own house for temporal rest; but thou enterest the House of God for rest eternal. If, therefore, in thine own house thou art busy, that nothing be amiss therein; oughtest thou to suffer it, as far as in thee lies, if thou shouldest perceive any thing amiss in the House of God, wherein salvation and rest without end is set before thee?"

"Then answered the Jews and said unto Him, What sign showest Thou unto us, that Thou doest these things?" not turning this awful warning of our Blessed Lord to their own profit by repenting. Thus man's evil nature, after all that has been done, is ever asking for sensible

³ In Joan. Tr. x. 9.

evidence, instead of seeking by obedience for the eye of faith. Christ indeed was about to work many miracles at this Passover, yet not such as were to gratify their unbelief, but to be discerned by the faithful few who had eyes to see. But He ever answers every request, even though appearing not to answer: and the very words that He spake unto them were in themselves, as Origen has observed, a sign of the most remarkable kind;—a sign which on account of this their wickedness, which He was endeavouring to correct, they would not receive; and so would bring about the very fulfilment of it. It was a sign, the strongest that could be offered, for it contained within it a most remarkable prophecy. As of all miracles there is none which God so entirely keeps in His own hands, and ascribes to Himself, as that of foretelling things to come, so He calls on mankind as witnesses of the same, “Have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? Ye are even My witnesses⁴.” And it may be observed, that although the expression is so full of type and prophecy, yet that it arises out of our Lord’s usual manner of teaching, from the objects around Him; it was in the Temple, and the Temple supplies the figure, as on another occasion the Door. “*Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up.*” This, which might appear to be no answer to them at the time, is not only as God speaks through the Old Testament, by parables and dark sayings afterwards to be disclosed, but is also after the manner of His Providential dealings with mankind, in which He does things which are dark to us, and apparently severe at the time, full of future profit to those who will take them aright; but prophetic of more severe judgments to

⁴ Isa. xliv. 8.

come on those who do not. "When men feel the scourge for their sins," says St. Augustin, "then let them recognize therein that the Lord hath made a scourge of small cords, and admonishes them thereby to change themselves: for if they will not do so they shall hear in the end, 'Bind them hand and foot, and cast them into outer darkness'.⁵"

"Then said the Jews, Forty and six years hath this Temple been in building, and wilt Thou raise it up in three days?" It seems quite uncertain whether the Temple here spoken of, as having been forty-six years in building, was that of David and Solomon; or the second Temple by Zorobabel; or the restoration of the same by Herod the Great. Origen seems to suppose it the first; St. Chrysostom and others, the Second Temple; of which indeed Haggai the Prophet speaks with reference to this appearing of our Lord, which renders the glory of this Temple far greater than that of the former. But the time specified is said by modern writers to correspond best to the restoration commenced by Herod; for the time mentioned by Josephus would be, it is said, exactly forty-six years before this time, and that restoration was still in progress. And certainly it must be confessed that this last is most likely to have been in the thoughts of those Jews who were speaking, if the restoration was so great that it appeared like a new Temple, and that restoration was still going on before their eyes. *"But He spake of the Temple of His Body."* His answer is similar to that which He gave on another occasion, when they asked for a sign, that they should have the sign of the Prophet Jonas; and at both times His reply seems to have been to the same purport, that

⁵ In Joan. Tr. x. 8.

this wickedness, which would not be amended, but asked for a sign, would go on till it had occasioned His death, and then the manifestation of His Godhead would be a sign to them. And this at another time He expressed still more clearly, "When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself." For this His prophetic declaration contained not only a sign of His Resurrection, but was a proof of His Godhead also; "for in Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" not spiritually only, as in us, but naturally and corporeally. His very expression implies His Divinity, "I will raise it up;" as He said on another occasion, "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." He would restore it in three days, and would show thereby that the Divinity was in the Temple of His Body; while the very reverse would be the case with the literal Temple, for they by their rejection of Him for three years, would, as it were in three days, destroy that Temple, and it would never be rebuilt, for the veil of the Temple was rent, and God had departed from them; they were no longer His habitation, but a den of thieves. The Temple of our Lord's Body was immaculate, and God was there, and it cannot see corruption; but these pollutions of the material Temple would drive God from His sanctuary; and where He is not, there is no life and no restoration. As in all things the verity of His words in its fulfilment far exceeds their thoughts, to raise a dead body was far more than to rebuild a Temple; and the peculiarity of the adaptation in this as in all other Divine words is manifold: it was now the Passover; it was three years from this time that He arose; for three years they were rejecting Him, and thereby destroying their Temple—a

year for a day, as is usual in prophecy ; and He during that time rebuilding His spiritual Temple out of its destruction.

“ When, therefore, He was risen from the dead, His Disciples remembered that He had said this unto them ;” for His Spirit brought all things unto their remembrance. And indeed it is evident, from the subsequent mention of it by the false witnesses, that it had been remembered in Jerusalem, and brought forth into prominent record when most needed. Thus, though it appeared no answer at the time, yet the bread cast upon the waters was gathered after many days, and the seed sown bore a hundred-fold ; nor did the word return unto Him void. *“ And they believed the Scripture,”* which spoke so much of His Resurrection. As with the Disciples going to Emmaus, He opened the Scriptures, and opened their hearts to understand them on this very point of His rising again. *“ They believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had spoken ;”* had spoken so darkly at the time, like those very Scriptures themselves. In both of these, His written and spoken Word, by His Spirit, and the power of His Resurrection, He afterwards brought them to faith and knowledge, opening their eyes to understand them. And as every thing in Scripture, and every word of Christ, is full of vast significations, unfolding themselves more and more, so is it with this passage. Thus is it taken by Origen, in his beautiful exposition of it at large. *“ Both the Temple,”* he says, *“ and the Body of Jesus, appear to me, according to one of these acceptations, to be a type of the Church, ‘ built up of living stones for a spiritual house ;’ as it is said, ‘ Ye are the Body of Christ, and members in particular.’ And although, as it is written, ‘ My bones are out of*

joint,' or are 'sundered⁶,' and scattered abroad; yet, amid those things that war against the oneness of that Temple, in troublous times and persecutions shall It arise. 'Not a bone of Him shall be broken;' though rent asunder and scattered, yet the dried bones, as Ezekiel says, shall be filled with Spirit⁷. And after the day of evil, on the third day shall His Body arise in the great day of the Lord, death being overcome. So that the Resurrection of Christ after the suffering of the Cross, contained within it a mystery of the Resurrection of the whole Body. As Christ is risen, so His elect are in Him spiritually risen now, and in Him shall they rise again in the last day;—being crucified together with Him, being buried together with Him, and rising together in Him, His whole body, the Church, the building not made with hands, in the New Heavens and the New Earth⁸. An earnest of which Resurrection He hath given us in that we are now risen together with Him, walking in newness of life, but not having yet risen into that hoped-for and blessed and perfect Resurrection." "Not on the third day," says the same writer, "but in three days will He raise it up; for in the three entire days is the Resurrection of His Body perfected; for there hath been a Resurrection, and there will be a Resurrection. For if by baptism we are buried with Christ, so also are we therein risen with Him. Yet this does not comprehend all senses of Resurrection, for again, 'in Christ shall all be made alive;' 'Christ the first-fruits: afterward they that are Christ's at His coming; then cometh the end⁹.'"

⁶ Marg. reading.

⁸ See Rev. ch. xxi.

⁷ Ezek. xxxvii. 14.

⁹ Com. in Joan. Tom. x. 29.

SECTION II

NICODEMUS COMING BY NIGHT

THIS Evangelist, not himself needing miracles for his confirmation, but ever dwelling on our Lord's discourses of things Heavenly, gives us no account of the miracles which Christ now wrought in Jerusalem; but it is evident, from what here occurs, and from the sensation concerning them, which we afterwards find had reached Galilee, that they were very great and remarkable. But this Disciple only incidentally alludes to them, and that in order to introduce, as his manner is, a Divine discourse which our Lord held at this period on Sacramental doctrine; and the person with whom He conversed being himself eminent among the Jews, St. John, from having apparently more access than others to such persons, naturally introduces it. "*But when He was at Jerusalem, at the Passover,*" that is to say, "*at the Feast,*" so called, "*many believed on His Name, beholding the miracles that He did.*" For thus did He first of all manifest Himself to the house of Israel, nor until rejected by them did He depart into Galilee. But these miracles He did not perform before them in order to collect around Him such as might externally be His followers, as any human teacher might do; but that such miracles might be left as appeals to the consciences of individuals, and to work that effect on their hearts that they might "continue in His Word," and be His "disciples indeed." For such was His mode of manifesting Himself; and, therefore, though they believed on Him, "*Yet Jesus Himself did not commit Him-*

self unto them, for He knew all men." He knew them as the workman knoweth his own work ; yea, knew them far better than they knew themselves ; for, as St. Augustin says, Peter declared, "I am with Thee unto death," but He who knew him better said, "This night shalt thou deny Me." "*And because He had no need that any should testify of man,*" by any external demonstration of favour or discipleship, as His very language was always directed to their thoughts, not to their words. "*For He knew what was in man ;*" in the hearts of men, as in the abyss of dark and deep waters, He Himself walked, nor needed any movement on the surface to tell Him of those fountains of evil which were hidden therein, however calm it might appear. "He did not commit Himself unto them." In like manner, St. Augustin thinks, as the Church deals with the catechumens, who believe in His Name, yet to whom Christ commits not Himself in the Eucharist. And St. Chrysostom, much to the same effect, that He did not commit unto them all His doctrines, as to those who were settled in the faith ; and did not communicate unto them the great mysteries of the Gospel, as when He says afterwards unto His disciples, "Henceforth I call you not servants but I have called you friends ; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you." It was indeed a description of our Lord's usual but mysterious mode of dealing with mankind ; and in the ensuing interview with Nicodemus He explained the same ; and that interview itself furnishes a lively illustration of it. The mode of his coming serves to intimate the estimation in which our Lord was held ; and He Himself there shows the legitimate effect which His miracles ought to have, the circumstances which prevented their having that effect, and hindered His

committing unto them the higher mysteries of His Kingdom.

"There was a man of the Pharisees, whose name was Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews ;"—one of the council of the Sanhedrim, and perhaps the head of a priestly family, or the ruler of a synagogue. *"This man came to Jesus by night."* "Many of the chief rulers," says St. John in another place, "believed on Him ; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue : " indeed so secret was this belief of a few, that the rest could say with confident exultation, "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on Him ? " And on the same occasion we find Nicodemus pleading our Lord's cause before them, not so openly as to confess Him, yet so as to expose himself to reproach and suspicion. More like a confession of Him is his coming forth at our Lord's death, together with Joseph of Arimathea, who was also "a disciple, but secretly, for fear of the Jews." He was evidently now much interested respecting the miracles which had taken place, the truth of which he neither could nor wished to dispute, and the inference from which he could not deny ; but still it was only after a human manner that he received them ; for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." And he was even now as the natural man, entangled by station and riches, and unable to cast aside that view of things which belongs to the natural man. He saw Him "a man acquainted with grief ;" he "hid, as it were," his "face from Him," muffling himself up with the covering of the night ; "He was despised, and" he "esteemed Him not." He was proud as a master of Israel, and could not humble himself to the strait gate

and humble door of the Kingdom; the Spirit dwelleth with the humble and contrite, and he was not born of the Spirit, but puffed up by the natural man. He came, therefore, "by night, and said unto Him, Master, we know that Thou art a Teacher come from God;" not myself only, but others also are with me persuaded of this, "for no one can do these miracles which Thou doest unless God be with Him." But here he pauses, he does not venture to put the question which his heart dictated; nor need he indeed express it, for it is already all open to the Great Searcher of hearts, before Whom he stood. What he intended to ask, if he could have found words to declare it, was, perhaps something of this kind—"your miracles are real and genuine, beyond doubt, and such as to evince that God is with you: but how is it, and what are we to think? Is it possible that you can be the Messiah, who art so mean and despised of men, poor in appearance, poor in associates, from a country ignoble to a proverb, acknowledged and countenanced by none of the learned or great; neither as Moses honoured among princes; nor as David in kingly station; nor as Aaron among priests; nor as Joshua or Zorobabel; without station, or authority, or honour, or wealth?" And there was something more than all this in his mind, which no tongue could express; for Christ was clothed all over with that scorn and hatred which sinful man ever hath to the holiness of God. Our Lord at once read all, and answered, as He used to do, not his words, but his thoughts; speaking at once, as to a teacher and a Pharisee, of His dispensation and His Kingdom, "*Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily,*"—these words of double asseveration St. John constantly repeats, though the other Evangelists have in no instance done so,—"*Verily, verily, I say unto*

thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." The Kingdom of God "cometh not by observation," it is already amongst you ; but it needs eyes to see it : and blessed are those eyes that see, and those ears that hear ; for many prophets and kings have desired to see and hear those things that are already amongst you, though the natural man perceives them not : for the great things of God are the very opposite to what men in a state of nature admire, and love, and value. You must hate what you now love : you must love what you now hate ; you must avoid what you now covet ; and covet that which you care not for ; you must become perfectly a new creature, and be born again, by a spiritual and hallowed admission into that new world ; by Him Who hath the keys of that Kingdom ; before you will discern those things which are now around you and at your doors.

"He thought," says St. Chrysostom, "that he was saying great things, but Christ showed him that he had not yet arrived at the threshold of that knowledge which was meet ; he was not yet in the vestibule, but was wandering far from that kingdom ; and so is every one who hath such an opinion of the Only Begotten Son of God. He came by night, but," says the same writer, "our gracious God rejected him not, nor reprov'd him, nor deprived him of His instruction ; but with great gentleness converses with him, and discloses to him doctrines exceeding high ; darkly indeed, yet still discloses them." And again, "though he believes Him one from God, yet he comes not to Him openly ; but Jesus says not this, nor reprehends him ; for a bruised reed will He not break, nor quench the smoking flax." "Unless thou art born from above," says St. Chrysostom, "unless thou partakest of the Spirit through the washing of regenera-

tion, thou canst not entertain a right opinion of Me. For he was bearing," he adds, "the clothing of death, that of the curse, that of corruption. He hath not yet received the symbol of the Lord: he is a stranger and foreigner: and hath not the Royal seal." "He that came by night," says St. Austin, "is still in darkness, and cannot comprehend the Light." He came in the night, for he had not the New Birth which is Illumination. "Ye were once darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." They who are baptized "are not of the night, but are of the day." To such Christ commits Himself; but not to these, like Nicodemus, who though in some sense he believes, yet not as one born again. "*Nicodemus saith unto Him, How can a man be born when he is old?*" as he himself perhaps now was. "*Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?*" It is evident from this reply, that Nicodemus understands our Lord to speak of being born "again;" for the word by which it is expressed in the Greek, would equally signify being "born from above;" and St. Chrysostom observes, that some render it "from above," or "from Heaven;" others "anew." He himself seems to prefer the latter interpretation; as also does St. Augustin. The natural simplicity of this reply of Nicodemus is remarkably similar to that of the Jews at Capernaum, when our Lord spoke of the other great Sacrament, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" Something indeed of the same kind is also observable in the disciples themselves, when our Lord reproves them for a want of that spiritual understanding which is of faith: when He spoke of "leaven" and they thought of "bread." So much does it need a mortified temper to understand spiritual mysteries. And this very expression of inquiry, "how can a man be born?" St. Chrysostom very well

observes, is the common method of infidelity. Thus carnal men, when they lift not up their minds to things heavenly, entangle and darken themselves with low notions from things natural and material causes. For the natural man not only receives not the things of the Spirit, but "they are foolishness unto him." As when they said, "How are the dead raised: and with what body do they come?" "He knew but of that one nativity," says St. Augustin, "which is of Adam and Eve: he knew not yet of that which is of God and the Church: he knew only of those parents that beget unto death: he knew not yet of those Parents that beget unto life." "There are two modes of birth; he understood but of one; one is of earth, the other of Heaven; one is of flesh, the other of the Spirit; one of mortality, the other of eternity; one of male and female, the other of God and the Church¹."

"Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, unless a man be born of water and Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." It is not of natural birth that I speak, but of that birth of which you have shadows in the washings of the Law, and in that of the holy Baptist; a sacramental and celestial washing, fulfilling in reality what those types showed in figure, and without which there is no entering into the kingdom of Heaven. As it He had said, in the words of St. Chrysostom, "I have formed man of earth and water; but he hath not become a vessel meet for use, but utterly corrupted: I wish not to form him again of earth and water, but of water and Spirit²." As the Spirit brooded on "the face of the waters" for the first creation, so must He for the second also. In the beautiful simile of Augustin, to the Heavenly manna our Lord would lead him, but he must first pass

¹ In Joan. Tr. xi. 6.

² In Joan. Hom. xxiv.

through the Red Sea of Baptism, wherein all sins shall be destroyed, as Pharaoh and his host in that Red Sea of old. For if that which was but the figure could do so much, what shall be done in the true Baptism which is the substance and reality? "If," says the same writer, "that which was done in figure conducted the people that passed over to the Manna, what shall Christ exhibit in the verity of that Baptism to His people who have passed the same?" And dwelling in like manner on the efficacy of this Baptism by water, St. Chrysostom says, "Many are the mysteries connected with it, but one only will I mention, that Divine symbols are performed therein, burying and dying, rising again and life; and all these things take place together. For when we immerse our heads in the water, the old man is buried as in a tomb, and once for all is entirely hidden below: then as we emerge the New Man arises. Easy as it is for us to be baptized, and again emerge from the water; so easy is it for God to bury the old man and bring forth the New. And this is done three times, that thou mayest know that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit fulfilleth all these."

Of this birth of water and the Spirit, said our Lord, man must be born in order to see His kingdom; for "*that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit;*" and "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." "*Marvel not that I said unto thee, it is needful for you to be born again.*" The birth of which I speak, is not of that visible and marked character which natural birth is; but the change is no less, from darkness unto light, from Satan unto God. You seem astonished and troubled at what I tell you of birth by the Spirit. Can you understand that most incorporeal of all

substances in nature; which you feel indeed and hear, but know not the laws by which it is governed? for though it be of power so great, neither is its coming or its going known, nor itself visible. Why then do you expect to know more of the motions of the Eternal Spirit? *"The wind bloweth where it willeth, and the voice thereof thou hearest, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: thus is every one that is born of the Spirit."* A man living by the Spirit of God is a mystery; men cannot comprehend him; they know not the motive from which his actions proceed, nor the end at which they aim. "If thou art born of the Spirit," says Augustin, "this will be the case with thee, that he who is not yet born of the Spirit, will not know of thee from whence thou comest, nor whither thou goest." St. Augustin, Origen, Ambrose, and others³, translate this word "Spirit" and not "wind," as of course it is but the same word (πνεῦμα) in the Greek: and they understand it of the Spirit that He breatheth unseen, that His comings and goings are not known, but His voice is heard; as in the Prophets and the Gospels, and in our Lord's teaching, and we may add in the life of man His voice is heard, and His influence is felt, but "His goings are **not** known." And St. Augustin observes, that even **now it is fulfilled** in Nicodemus, for in the words of Christ he hears the voice of the Spirit, but judging **as the natural** man, he knows not whence He is nor **whither** He goeth. It may be observed, that in the **former** mention of "water and Spirit," the Greek Article is **not attached** to the word "Spirit," because it is of His **influences** that it speaks; but here the Article is attached, "the Spirit," because it speaks of the Holy Ghost Personally.

³ See Maldonat. cap. iii. sec. 27.

“Nicodemus answered and said unto Him, How can these things be?” What is this great change thus wrought, that is to be like a new birth? *“Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou the teacher of Israel, and understandest not these things?”* Even in the Law are not washings necessary before appearing in God’s presence? and are not your Baptisms of proselytes supposed to signify in figure a new birth externally, from the new relation and position in which the Baptized stands, “forgetting his own people and his father’s house”? What if to water in Baptism God should add an unseen power by His Presence to produce all this, that your washing signify! And surely not alone to these symbolical baptisms in the Law does our Lord allude, which should have opened the heart of the Teacher of Israel to understand. St. Chrysostom well supposes Him to be referring to all those things known to an Israelite, which prefigured the New Birth in Baptism. Such was the first formation of man from the ground, and the woman from his side; such were the barren women bearing children beyond nature; such especially were things wrought by waters; such was that fountain in which Elisha made the iron to swim; the Red Sea crossed by the Jews; the Angel moving the waters of the pool; the cleansing of Naaman the Syrian in the river Jordan. All these things, as in type, declared the birth and the purification which was about to be. So also did many things spoken by the Prophets; many are the expressions that indicate “a new people that should be born whom the Lord hath made;” “youth renewed as the eagle;” “sin not imputed,” “unrighteousness forgiven:” and the like. All these things should have been known and considered by Nicodemus. The masters in Israel were acutely and deeply versed in the Scriptures, far

more so even than the critical expositors among moderns; but they were entirely ignorant of its spiritual intent and meaning, from want of the love and humility of a serious mind. But our Lord seems to say, You are offended because I speak of things mysterious; you understand not because you believe not; and you believe not because you judge as the carnal man. But be assured He that speaketh from Heaven hath evidence far more substantial and sure for what He says, than that which the senses furnish to the natural man. "*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that We do know, and testify that which We have seen; and our testimony ye receive not.*" The Baptist speaks of Christ's testimony in a very similar manner, "what He hath seen and heard that He testifieth; and no man receiveth His testimony;" as if taking the words from our Lord Himself. Perhaps indeed a similar declaration was frequent with Christ; for afterwards we read of His saying, "I speak that which I have seen with My Father;" and in like manner, "as My Father hath taught Me I speak these things;" that is, I speak of great eternal verities and realities, and My testimony is founded on knowledge, such as sight and hearing are to you.

"*If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how can ye believe, if I tell you heavenly things?*" There seems some doubt as to what is intended by these "earthly things," in distinction from Heavenly. But first it may be observed, that our Lord is here speaking in the plural number, He says, "ye receive not our testimony;" and therefore it may be said not of Nicodemus alone, that he received not His testimony, but of the Jews generally or of the Pharisees. And thus also when He speaks of His having told them of earthly things, it is still in the plural. It may perhaps allude to circumstances previous to this

conversation. And indeed St. Augustin supposes this, when he explains the "earthly things," to refer to our Lord's previous discourse concerning the Temple. As if He had said, you come to Me to learn of things Heavenly, but I cannot teach mysteries to you though a Teacher in Israel, for you Pharisees have not believed those earthly things I taught. Theophylact thus supposes it to be spoken not of Nicodemus, but of the Jews that believed not. Expressions of this kind are not unfrequent in St. John, as "if ye believe not his (Moses's) writings, how can ye believe My words?" "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God Whom he hath not seen?" Thus is it with the mysterious doctrines of God, that they cannot be known by us unless we first practise those things that are before us, and so gain the Divine light. "Hardly do we guess aright at things that are upon earth:—but the things that are in Heaven who hath searched out; except Thou give wisdom, and send Thy Holy Spirit from above⁴?" But the whole passage may be explained with reference to Nicodemus alone; as if He had said, I have as yet used but earthly similitudes to express this entire change of heart, explaining it from washings you are acquainted with, and from the nature of wind: and as you come to learn of Me as the Messiah, I would tell you of things infinitely Divine, but even those similitudes I take from earth, from grossness of heart you understand not. He had been speaking to him, as St. Chrysostom supposes it to mean, in a humble manner, of generation here on earth, which is by water and the Spirit; and explained this power by an earthly similitude of the wind. "Nor need we be surprised," says the same writer, "that He should speak of the new and spiritual birth by

⁴ Wisd. ix. 16, 17.

Baptism, as of an earthly thing, as He so speaks of it in comparison of what He had wished to explain to him, of His own Eternal generation from the Father, and of His coming down into the world: for He was infinitely Higher than what Nicodemus had supposed Him, as a mere teacher come from God⁵."

And of those things that are Divine, we may suppose to be the connexion of our Lord's words, who can tell you? what experience of man can supply that knowledge? "*And no one hath ascended up to Heaven, except He that came down from Heaven, the Son of Man Which is in Heaven,*"—Who is not separate from His Godhead, but though on earth, yet notwithstanding is in Heaven. As St. John had said before, "No one hath seen God at any time, the Only Begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." "The Son of Man Who is in Heaven," for doubtless wherever Christ is, there is Heaven; "exceeding high, as the words sound," says St. Chrysostom, "yet extremely unworthy are they of His greatness, for not in Heaven alone is He, but every where, and filleth all things. The Son of Man, Whom He here speaks of, is not the flesh; but He so designates His entire Person, if I may so speak, from His inferior substance: for this is His custom oftentimes to designate Himself from His Godhead, and oftentimes from His Manhood." And St. Augustin in like manner, "He was here and He was in Heaven; He was here in the Flesh, in Divinity He was in Heaven; nay, in Divinity every where. Born of a mother, separated not from the Father. A twofold Birth is understood of Christ, one Divine, the other Human; the one through which we are made; the other through which we are made anew. Both

⁵ In Joan. Hom. xxvii. 1.

marvellous,—one without mother, the other without father⁶.” But it may be observed, that our Lord seems to speak in a manner similar to what He does when the Jews at Capernaum disputed carnally of the other Sacrament, “What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before?” “The Son of Man,” even now, “in Heaven,”—“the Son of Man” seen “ascending up to Heaven;” these high truths may give some apprehension of those lofty and mysterious gifts that are on earth in His Sacraments: as He Himself is Man, and yet God; on earth and in Heaven; so in these also are there two worlds, an earthly sign and a hidden Spirit. No one hath ascended into Heaven but the Son of Man, and no one can ascend thither unless he is in Him, and unless he first descends at Baptism to make him fit, by a new birth, to ascend thither. His coming down from Heaven is a pledge to us that He will bring down to us a new nature at Baptism; and place us in Heavenly places while we are on earth. His ascending up to Heaven is a pledge that, by the Eucharist, the Son of Man Who is in Heaven will draw us up thither as partakers of His Body. It is as if He had said, Moses went up to the Mount to be with God, and came down and told you as he had seen and heard: no one has ascended up to Heaven, but I have come down from thence, and, independent of time and place, I still am there.

And here below, He seems to add, am I bearing evil; that they who look to Me as the victim for all evil may be saved. This mention of His Crucifixion He introduces, as St. Chrysostom thinks, to intimate how His Baptism is to have such power, viz. by that life-giving Sacrifice for which, by ineffable love, He hath come down

⁶ In Joan. Tr. xii. 3.

⁷ John vi. 62.

from Heaven. "*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that every one that believeth on Him may not perish*" eternally, as they did by temporal death, "*but may have everlasting life.*" May turn unto Him, and look unto Him, though He appear but vile in your eyes, even as the serpent which had caused their suffering, when lifted up in harmless death; so shall all evil die in thee, and all evil be borne by thee. He was made sin for us Who had no sin, as the serpent represents evil; nay, He was made death for us, Who had in Himself immortality; for by His death He killed death, as by that serpent, lifted up, the power of the serpent should be destroyed. "What are these biting serpents," says Augustin, "but sins causing death? and what is the serpent lifted up, but the death of Christ on the Cross? for since from the serpent came death, by the effigy of a serpent is it set forth." So also St. Chrysostom, who adds, "There a serpent bit, and a serpent healed; and so here death destroyed, and death saved. But the serpent which destroyed had poison; that which saved was free from poison. And so is it here, for the death which destroyed had sin, as the serpent's poison; the death of the Lord was free from sin, as the serpent of brass was without poison." For "He did no sin, neither was guile in His mouth." "*For so God loved the world, that He gave His Son, the Only Begotten, that every one that believeth in Him*"—again, repeating the words, and O precious and blessed words, again and again repeated in the ears of dying sinners!—that every one that believeth in Him "*may not perish, but have everlasting life.*" Perhaps our Lord, in this allusion to His death, was speaking in prophetic spirit, as to Him who, He knew, should embalm His Body for

the grave, thus revealing to him His atoning sacrifice, and the love of His Father which should give Him to die.

There is indeed a coming of the Son of God to judge the world with demonstration of power and glory, as the Pharisees expect, though infinitely beyond their thoughts; but it is not so now; it is to save, not to condemn. *For God hath not sent His Son into the world to condemn,* or judge, *“the world; but that the world through Him might be saved,”* for there is no salvation in any other. *“He that believeth on Him is not condemned,”* for “there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit;” for their savingly believing in Him proves Christ to be in them Who justifies and sanctifies; of such He declares that they have already “passed from death unto life,” that “he that believeth on the Son hath life.” *“But he that believeth not is already condemned:”* as Adam died on the day that he ate of the forbidden fruit, although in some sense he still lived, so says St. Chrysostom, he that believeth not is already condemned before the Judgment: *“because He hath not believed on the Name of the Only Begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light hath come into the world, and”* hath shown thereby that *“men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”* For if He “had not come and spoken unto them they had not had sin; but now they have no cloke for their sin.” Nor can they be admitted to be in Heaven with God, who by this manifestation have both seen and hated Him and His Father. This is the reason why the Baptist declared this coming of the Kingdom to be the “purging of the floor,” “the axe at the root of the trees;” and hence it was said that His

appearing should be as a "refiner's fire." "*For every one that doeth evil things hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his deeds should be put to the proof*" and detected. This is the explanation of what appears so mysterious to the Jews, that Christ hath come as it were in secret, not with outward show or authority, "without observation," in order that He might manifest Himself to them that would do His will. "*But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his works might be made manifest, that they are wrought in God;*" as the living tree in a dark place spreadeth forth its branches towards the light; so he that hath life within him seeketh the light, instinctively and certainly: the good man seeketh the Eye of God to search his heart. Think not, therefore, O Nicodemus, that thou and the Pharisees wilt be excused; they because they have no more sensible sign; you because, as other disciples in secret, you fear man, and think more of the praise of man than of God, and hold aloof: your coming to Christ, so far as you do so from faith in the Son of God, it is unto life; so far as you do not, but are under fear of man, it is to your condemnation; you walk in darkness, and are of the night.

SECTION III

CHRIST IN THE LAND OF JUDEA

THERE is here a considerable space of time in the three years of our Lord's Ministry, of which but little is said in the sacred narrative, and this short mention occurs in St. John's Gospel. That it included the chief part of that first year is probable from this, that on retiring from

Judea in His way to Galilee it appears, from an incidental expression at the Well of Samaria, that it wanted but "four months to the harvest;" which could not have been earlier than the ensuing Passover, when the first-fruits of the harvest were offered, or Pentecost, which was the full in-gathering. That this period of our Lord's Ministry, of which no account exists but this casual mention, was in itself highly important is evident from this fact, that great as the sensation was occasioned by St. John the Baptist and the multitudes that came to him, it was already exceeded by the effect of our Lord's teaching, so as to attract the enmity of the Pharisees: and especially from the consideration that this part of our Lord's Ministry seems to comprehend all His first appeal by words and works to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel," in Judea itself, as it has been shown in another place*, before He relinquished them. It is very remarkable, that not only does St. John dwell so much on Sacramental doctrine, but the mode by which he expresses Christ's making disciples by preaching and miracles is simply comprehended in the term that He "baptized;" a circumstance in itself entirely omitted by the other Evangelists, viz. that His disciples were thus admitted into covenant with Him during His life by this Sacrament. And here, were it not for this, as it were incidental, description of these things, which is given in St. John,—for the apparent reason of introducing the subject of this Sacrament, and the testimony of the Baptist to our Lord's Godhead,—all the circumstances of this first Passover, and our Lord's subsequent Ministry at this time in or near Jerusalem, would have been entirely left in silence; and in fact all that preaching by works and words:

* See Study of Gospels, pp. 327. 329.

directed immediately to the impenitent Judea. Not only has our Lord chosen obscure Galileans for His historians, but Galilee itself for the most part furnishes the materials for their history; perhaps it was the only scene of His Ministry at the time successful, as His disciples were from thence; and that the same was the cause for His specifying it so particularly after the Resurrection, as the scene for His manifestations. The learned Scribe and Pharisee have furnished no single word or trace of the things said and done in their presence—things more worthy of record than all things else that have been said and done since the beginning of the world. And it is observable, that the only narrative of what occurred at Jerusalem during our Lord's Ministry, excepting at the period of His death, are given by the Evangelist who wrote after its destruction.

St. John's reason for recording these circumstances is evident. "*After these things Jesus and His disciples,*" i. e. those who were afterwards His disciples, "*went*" from Jerusalem "*into the land of Judea; and there He baptized.*" So mysteriously and yet so significantly is it recorded that He baptized, although He baptized not Himself, but only ministerially and through His disciples, to intimate to us that all Baptism which is performed by His authority is His Baptism. And even the chief of His Ministers, we find in the case of St. Paul, did not himself baptize, that the Divine power of Baptism might be the more strongly marked from the weakness of the human instrument; that nothing might appear to be added to it by any man's worthiness in the matter of so great a Sacrament; that though "the treasure" be in "earthen vessels," "the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us." The fact of our Lord not Himself

baptizing, for some great and Divine reason, is the more remarkable, as John was himself then baptizing; and He Who washed His own disciples' feet, must have had greater reason for not doing so Himself than any thing which the mere work of itself could have accounted for. And the circumstance that gave rise to the discussion now to be mentioned was, that St. John the Baptist was still baptizing, not indeed at Bethabara, where he had before, but still in the river Jordan, and it is supposed lower down and towards Galilee; for John also himself seems receding more and more from Judea, till lost in the court and prison of the Galilean Tetrarch. "*And John also was baptizing in Ænon, near to Salem, for there was much water there. And they came and were baptized. For John was not yet cast into prison.*" But John himself had spoken in such terms of our Lord's Baptism, as of One that should baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire; that their respective Baptisms could not but be brought into comparison with each other: especially with those Jews who, as at the feast in St. Matthew's house, would be ever instilling into their ears something against their own master, or against Christ. "*There arose therefore a question between*" some "*of the disciples of John and the Jews about purifying.*" It is probable that our Lord had by no means as yet manifested the full power and import of His own Baptism, as He afterwards did, in the name of the Three Persons of the Ever-blessed Trinity; but that it was blessed with the "unspeakable gift," according to faith in His Name, since the descent of the Holy Spirit on His own Baptism.

But this point is not without question. St. Chrysostom considers that the Baptism of our Lord's disciples at this period was no more than the Baptism of John, being both

alike without the grace of the Spirit, and both having the same object, that of attaching disciples to Christ⁹. The same is also the opinion of Tertullian, that "the full Baptism of Christ could not then be given by His disciples, seeing that the glory of the Lord was not as yet made perfect, nor the effectual power of the laver established by His Passion and Resurrection; for neither could our death be abolished save by the Passion of the Lord, nor our life restored without His Resurrection¹." But perhaps to this opinion it may be answered, that the gifts of God cannot be thus circumscribed or explained; for the Son of Man upon earth forgave sins, and yet no sins could be forgiven but through that Atoning Blood which was not yet shed; except in that sense in which it is divinely declared, that the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world. St. Augustin, Cyril, and others thus think differently; and that our Lord's baptizing at the same time as St. John the Baptist, and not baptizing Himself, but through His disciples, was to indicate the great difference between this His Spiritual Baptism and that of John with water unto repentance². It was probably this indeed that gave rise to the following dispute: certainly John the Baptist had already so spoken of the purifying and quickening power of our Lord's Baptism, as by a fiery washing of the soul itself, that the Jews might from this circumstance have tried to move the envy of St. John's disciples, and from the comparative purifying have passed on to the use of their master's Baptism at all; although it is evident from the sequel that it was against our Lord Himself, as in the house of Levi, that their envy and ill-will was directed.

⁹ In Joan. Hom. xxix. 1. ¹ Of Baptism, Ox. Tr. xi. p. 269.

² See Maldonat, in Joan. cap. iii. 82, 83.

But if his disciples were for a moment capable of such feelings at the growing influence of another, very different were the thoughts of the holy Baptist himself, and to none could they better go for their remedy. For already was he enlightened and warmed and delighting in the glow of that rising Sun of Righteousness. "*And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, He that was with thee beyond Jordan,*" in Bethabara, "*to Whom thou barest witness, behold He baptizeth, and all men come to Him.*" Their meaning was obvious. "*John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from Heaven.*" Each one hath his place by Divine order and dispensation, and even if I coveted a more extensive sphere and a Baptism of deeper power, it is enough that it has not been assigned me from above. The same cure which the Apostle applies to vain-glory, "What hast thou which thou didst not receive? and if thou receivedst it, why dost thou boast as if thou receivedst it not?" In some sense of this kind St. Augustin would take it, as spoken of himself by the Baptist, that he has nothing whereof to glory, and must needs speak the truth. But St. Chrysostom thinks it is said with reference to Christ, and not of himself; as if he implied that it is impossible for them who envy the greatness of Christ to fight against God. Perhaps it includes both senses, that every one has his place assigned by God, He of a Lord, I of a servant, and the meanest of His servants.

Ye speak my testimony—"Ye yourselves bear me witness that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before Him. He that hath the Bride is the Bridegroom." It is not mine by Baptism to give you a new birth as children of God; mine was it to present His Church "as a chaste Virgin unto Christ;" to prepare you for Him by

the teaching and Baptism of Repentance: the Bride is His; whosoever by another Baptism would draw away souls from Him is, as the Prophets called the idolaters of old, "adulterous." *"But the friend of the Bridegroom, who standeth and knoweth Him, rejoiceth with"* exceeding *"joy on account of the voice of the Bridegroom."* He "standeth and heareth" Him, for the holy Baptist had not to follow Christ as His disciples; for this was not his office; "John stood," we read before, "and looked on Jesus;" but with a joy exceeding the joy of men had he been allowed to hear His gracious words, and had received of His fulness grace and truth. It may be that they were these very disciples of John who were afterwards comforted by Christ, by His speaking of Himself under the same expression, and of the joy of those that are with the Bridegroom—"Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn while the Bridegroom is with them?"—"the Bridegroom shall be taken from them" hereafter, as your master is now from you, "and then shall they fast." "By standing and hearing," says St. Chrysostom, "he means that his own part had now ceased; and that hereafter he had but to stand and listen, having delivered up to Him the Bride³." But St. Augustin explains it spiritually, he who standeth, and falleth not in the faith, but heareth the Bridegroom's voice. It may also, as Maldonatus and Dr. Hammond observe, have some allusion in the primary sense to the customary office of the Bridegroom's friend, to stand and do him service, and speak not, when he has delivered to him the bride. His desire had been, like that of St. Paul, that Christ "might present unto Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle." And Christ was now present with power,

³ In Joan. Hom. xxix. 3.

"like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap," to do what the Baptism of John could not. "*This my joy therefore is fulfilled.*" He had stood by Him "at Whose right hand there is fulness of joy;" rejoicing "before Him according to the joy in harvest; and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil⁴." He rejoices, but not in himself, "for he who wishes to rejoice in himself," says St. Augustin, "shall be sorrowful; but he who wishes to rejoice in God, shall rejoice for ever, for God is everlasting⁵." And we also even now may stand and hear the voice of the Bridegroom, as He speaketh to us in the Scriptures, and have our "joy fulfilled." But what is this joy to the joy of him who shall hear the voice of the Bridegroom returning from the wedding; the friend of the Bridegroom, who shall "stand with his loins girt and his lamp burning," and shall "hear His voice?" The greater will be his joy then for his mourning now; for of him the Bridegroom saith, "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."

"This my joy is therefore fulfilled," said the holy Baptist; "I have come already to the fulness of joy, such as I can receive in this world;" and like aged Simeon, his wish was now to depart in peace, for his end also was near. "*He must increase,*" not in Himself, but in the manifestation of His power and Godhead; "must increase," till He hath filled earth and Heaven with stars for ever, and every enemy is put under His feet: "*but I must decrease,*" as the star that delights for itself to be hid in the rising Sun. For every thing that is earthly must decrease and wane away, and come to an end. His delight is not only in the greatness of his Master, but also in his own humiliation and littleness. Thus the manifestation of Christ makes

⁴ Isa. ix. 3.

⁵ In Joan. Tr. xiv. 2.

every thing to fade, as the flower before the sun. "This is a great mystery," says St. Augustin, "before the Lord came, men gloried in themselves; He came as man, that the glory of man might be lessened, and the glory of God increased. Sinless He came to forgive sins, by the mercy of God, and the confession of man: man's confession is his humiliation; God's mercy is His greatness⁶." Where Augustin speaks as if John in his own person represented all mankind, in distinction from Christ. But peculiarly too of the Baptist himself was it true, he was high in estimation of all as a Prophet, honoured for his austerities and Priestly birth, and supposed to be the very Christ: Christ was despised, the "son of the carpenter," the "friend of publicans and sinners;" but much otherwise would it be seen when the truth respecting both should be known.

"*He that cometh from above, is above all. He that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth.*" "John himself," says the last-mentioned writer, "is earthly, and speaketh of the earth; whatsoever thou hearest from him which is Divine, is not of him that receives, but of Him that enlighteneth him." "*He that cometh from Heaven is above all.*" He had spoken of himself as the friend that delighted to hear the Bridegroom's voice, and now he proceeds to speak of Him in His own words, as if treasuring them up with affectionate interest, and thinking no other words but His own so worthy, with which he could speak of Him: for the words are much the same as our Lord had used to Nicodemus, and probably on other occasions⁷. "*And what He hath seen and heard that He testifieth, and no one receiveth His testimony.*" Our Lord had said to Nicodemus, "ye receive not:" John says, "no one receiveth." For no one did as yet receive Him as God, or

⁶ In Joan. Tr. xiv. 5.

⁷ John vii. 16; viii. 26; xii. 49.

fully enter into His words as Divine : "Many believed on Him ;" many were His baptized disciples ; but no one received Him as God. Or it may be, as St. Chrysostom explains it, hardly any one ; for he goes on to speak of some who did believe. "*He that hath received His testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.*" As Wisdom shall be justified of her own children, so he that receives His testimony is a witness to the truth of God ; "he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself : he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar*." "*For He Whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God.*" For "My doctrine is not Mine," He said, "but His that sent Me." "I can of Myself do nothing, the Father that sent Me He doeth the works." He speaketh the words in Him Who is the Manifestation of the Father, the irradiation of the Father's light, the express Image of His Person. "*For God giveth not the Spirit by measure*" unto Him, as He does to all created beings according to diversity of operation ; for "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead." "*The Father loveth the Son,*" as the testimony of Heaven had already declared, "*and hath given all things into His hand.*" According to His own expression, "all things are delivered unto Me of My Father." And as this Evangelist says of Him at the last, "knowing that the Father had put all things into His hands : " and as our Lord's own words of Prayer to the Father, "as Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He may give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him." "*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life,*" speaking again in almost the same words that our Lord had used to Nicodemus. "*But he that is disobedient to the Son shall not see life ;*" shall be "destroyed from among the people," as

* 1 John v. 10.

† Acts iii. 23.

Moses said of him that "heareth not that Prophet;" he "shall not see life," even when manifested before his eyes in this manifestation of the Kingdom here on earth, as being developed in that darkness which is the forerunner of darkness and death eternal. "*But the wrath of God abideth upon him.*" The wrath of God under which he is born still continueth, and shall continue on him with a permanent abiding, so that he shall not see life.

Out of this land of darkness, and which lieth under the shadow of death, I stretch forth my hands unto Thee. O Thou Who dwellest in the Light, which no man can approach unto, Who art without variableness or shadow of turning, from Whom alone cometh every good and perfect gift, grant unto me that Wisdom which cometh from above, which Thou hast promised to give unto those who ask it of Thee; grant me to understand Thy words, which are from Heaven: and to loose my hold of earthly things, and to follow Thee! Do Thou forget those things which are past, blot them out of Thine own Book, and wash them out of my heart, that I may be able to see Thee Who art the true Light; to see Thee and to love Thee, in such sort that I may see and love nothing else, except what I behold and love in Thee!

SECTION IV

JOHN CAST INTO PRISON

IN the last Section we find that St. John the Evangelist introduces the holy Baptist, for no other purpose than that for which he had done so on the former occasions, in order to record the very high testimony he had given to Christ;

delighting to describe with exactness, and detail all the circumstances of that testimony, to which our Lord so frequently appealed to the Pharisees, but which is nowhere else recorded. And now we come to a part in the narrative where the different Evangelists beautifully serve the end of supporting each other, afford in connexion and harmony that mutual explanation which each separately needs, and thus furnish a thread wanting in the history by a "three-fold cord not easily broken." St. Luke indeed affords no clue whatever to any cause for our Lord making Galilee the seat of His ministry, merely saying after the Temptation, "*And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee.*" But St. John, after the former narrative, of our Lord and the Baptist exercising their ministry in Judea at the same time, proceeds to mention, "*When therefore the Lord knew, how that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus Himself baptized not, but His disciples,) He left Judea and departed again into Galilee.*" But the reason here alleged does not of itself appear sufficient to account for the fact, which it appears to explain; for there seems no adequate reason why the Pharisees having heard of a circumstance which we find was so notorious, should of itself make so great a change in our Lord's movements and place of abode. And here the other two Evangelists afford another reason for our Lord taking up His future ministry in Galilee, of itself equally insufficient to account for it, as far as it is expressed. St. Mark says, "*Now after that John was put in prison Jesus came into Galilee.*" St. Matthew more expressly, "*Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison He retired,*" withdrew from the more public and chosen scene, "*into Galilee.*" But here the circumstance of John being imprisoned by Herod

Antipas of Galilee, does not of itself explain why our Lord should retire from the sacred Land into that very country: but put all the statements together, and we have a very full and clear narrative. While our Lord's ministry and that of John continued simultaneously, we found that the Pharisees were endeavouring to set the disciples of one against the other; but now that the holy Baptist was removed by his imprisonment, they were showing indications that no little sensation was occasioned among them, that the greater Witness with a larger company of followers still remained: so that our Lord knew that it was impossible He could continue any longer among them and within their reach. Then therefore, and not till then, does He retire to the countries contiguous to the Gentiles, and spoken of as lying in Heathen darkness; but not till, from His own declaration and that of John the Baptist, it appears that He was rejected by them: "Ye receive not My testimony," says our Lord to Nicodemus: "no man receiveth His testimony," says the Preacher of Repentance. Thus St. Augustin supposes that the Baptist was then cast into prison, at the period of which St. John proceeds to speak; and explains his words to imply, that the Pharisees had heard that Christ was making and baptizing more disciples than John had done, when he was at liberty¹. The mode in which St. Matthew and St. Mark speak of our Lord's retiring into Galilee, at this period of their history, indicates that they did not consider it by any means a matter of course, but that for some urgent cause He at this time changed the scene of His abode. And it is evident that at this period they take up the narrative, rather as furnishing memoirs of some things in Galilee, than as a history of our Lord's ministry.

¹ De Cousen. Evan. lib. ii. 42.

We found on the last mention of St. John the Baptist that he was approaching the dominions of the wicked Ruler of Galilee; how he came first into his presence is not mentioned; for we read of nothing more than the effects of his rebuking him, as it occurs in other parts of the sacred narrative. "*But Herod the Tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison*" (Luke). "*For Herod*" (Matt. Mark) "*had himself sent forth and*" (Mark) "*laid hold upon John, and bound him*" (and put him, Matt.) "*in prison:*" it is supposed in the castle of Machærus in Perea, "*for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife*" (Matt. Mark), "*for he had married her*" (Mark); it was not, it seems, his brother Philip, the Governor of Trachonitis, but Herod Philip, another son of Herod the Great, by Mariamne. "*For John had said unto him*" (unto Herod, Mark), "*it is not lawful for thee to have her*" (Matt. Mark), "*to have thy brother's wife*" (Mark). Whether her husband Philip was alive seems uncertain; for it was in either case unlawful². Even if he were dead, although the law required it in some cases, yet, as Theophylact says, as there was a daughter it would be criminal in this, for on failure of issue alone did it allow of it. And without such an express command it would be incestuous; as Abraham's slaying his son, had it not been for the command, would have been murder. Tertullian, Chrysostom, and Theophylact think her husband was dead³. St. Jerome supposes that he was not dead; he, with Bede and others, mention from an old history that she was the daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia, who having a quarrel with Philip, took away his

² See Ministry, 2nd Year, p. 336.

³ Maldonat. in. Matt. xiv. 3.

daughter from him, and gave her to his brother Antipas. But this seems an error, for the daughter of Aretas was a former wife of Philip; whereas Herodias was the daughter of Aristobulus. It is stated, on the authority of Josephus and Hegesippus, that Herod Antipas, on his way to Rome, staying at the house of his brother Philip, seduced his wife, and induced her to live with him on his return.

“Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not: for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man, and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly” (Mark). This insertion made by St. Mark is truly remarkable, that so wicked a man should have heard with pleasure the stern Preacher of Repentance, and done many things because of him; like the Pharisees of whom our Lord said, that they were willing “for a season to rejoice in his light.” It shows that he was not at that time lost to a sense of good, and also that to take delight in hearing, and to do many things, is very compatible with great guilt at heart; being an occasional gleam of better feeling, like that of Felix, who though he heard Paul with interest, and trembled at his words, yet altered not his course of life, nor relinquished his besetting vice; like the seed in the parable, which fell on the rocky ground and sprung up quickly, “because it had no depth of earth.” But the circumstance is also worthy of notice with respect to the Baptist himself, for what, it may be asked, could the holy man of God, who had lived in the wilderness in fastings and prayers, and whose only voice was the voice of Repentance, have to say to please such a king, that he should be heard with welcome even in such a Court?

But certainly it is a fresh proof of that remarkable sweetness and humility which pervades the Baptist, combined with that stern majesty which is more commonly supposed to mark his character ; for the severity of self-renunciation generally produces meekness to others : it affords an additional instance, that honey comes forth from the stony rock in the kingdom of grace,—that out of the strong one cometh sweetness. Thus doth God “make the wilderness” of Judah “like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord⁴,” that the austerity of the mountains and the camel’s hair should bring forth one that could be listened to in the palace of the adulterous, incestuous king. In the spirit and power of Elias he stood before another Ahab, and another Jezebel, and for one short moment does the king, like another Ahab, seem to humble himself, and to go softly, saying, “Hast thou found me, O my enemy⁵?” But it is but for a moment ; he would have put him to death for all this. “*And when he would have put him to death,*” says St. Matthew, “*he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a Prophet.*” While he is constrained by no better motive, Satan will find him a more urgent reason still, to overcome such a scruple.

SECTION V

JESUS AT THE WELL OF SAMARIA

OUR Lord was now returning from Judea to Galilee, “*and it was necessary for Him to go through Samaria.*” Driven from them of Judea He comes to Samaria, for

⁴ Isa. li. 3.

⁵ 1 Kings xxi. 20. 27.

their fall shall be the riches of the world: He seeks the Jews, but they turn from Him: He seeks not the aliens, but by constraint appears before them, and they seek Him, "taking hold of His skirt, and saying, We will go with You;" for "God is with You⁶." "*He cometh therefore to a city of Samaria, called Sychar,*" the Sychem of the Old Testament, and Naplosa, or Nablous, as it is now called, "*near to the parcel of ground which Jacob gave to his son Joseph,*" that wide and fertile field, as Maundrel and other travellers tell us, on which that blessing of the beloved Joseph seems to rest unto this day. Hallowed spot, at the opening of that valley which lay between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, the fertile land by the well, where Jesus sat, between the mountains of cursing and of blessing, bequeathed by Israel to his beloved Joseph, who is himself the "fruitful bough by the well," to whom the sun, and moon, and stars shall bow down! How full of significancy is this emblem of the kingdom; and what a subject for mysterious contemplation! "*Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus,*" weary as He was, "*on the well. It was about the sixth hour.*" At six o'clock of our time⁷, between noon and evening, at the season when of old we found them coming forth to water their flocks; "at the time of the evening, even at the time that women go out to draw water⁸." And what associations of early times does the well call to mind? To the well the Angel led the devout servant of Abraham, where Rebecca received on her hands the golden pledges: at the well Jacob, an outcast, and weary, and alone, saw for the first time that Rachel whom he so tenderly loved; Moses too, when "he fled from the face of Pharaoh," "sat down by a

⁶ Zech. viii. 23: ⁷ See The Passion, p. 255. ⁸ Gen. xxiv. 11.

well^o," and met with his alien wife of Midian. He also Whom St. John had lately described as the Bridegroom, sat at the well, fleeing from the face of that Israel, who now was as Pharaoh;—weary and thirsty, and alone. As by His death we have life, so by His weariness are we refreshed; by His weakness do we obtain strength; and through His thirst do we obtain the living water. He sat at the well indeed, bequeathed of Israel, but by a Samaritan city, "that foolish people that dwell in Sichem¹;" for He hath "chosen the foolish things of the world," that they may gain truest wisdom. And what is this woman but an emblem of the Church, as Augustin says? which is an alien, as the wife of Moses; and it may be an adulteress, as Rahab; the Church unclean from the Heathen, but at the well washed. Here, therefore, at the evening of this world, does Christ come looking out for us, sitting down at the well of Baptism to call His Church.

"There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus saith unto her, Give Me to drink." "Hungry and thirsty, His soul fainted" in Him. *"For His Disciples had gone into the city to buy meat."* The woman therefore—probably first giving Him the water, for she evidently does not afterwards, but leaves her waterpot, hastening away—the woman of Samaria saith unto Him, *"How is it that Thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a woman of Samaria?"* Agreeably surprised at the meekness and gentleness of such a request from a stranger in the garb and with the accent of a Jew; for to ask a favour of an enemy is often a greater proof of forgiveness than to confer one. *"For the Jews"*—adds the Evangelist, or, as St. Chrysostom takes it, the woman herself—

¹ Exod. ii. 15.

• Ecclus. i. 26.

"have no dealings with the Samaritans:" though they may buy of them, yet receive no favour from them, and eat and drink out of no vessel used by the unclean. *"Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and Who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water."* Such jealousies which have existed between you, shall find an end in Him that asketh of thee this favour, and Who asks it of thee because He wishes thee to ask of Him, that He may confer on thee a more substantial benefit than this; for this it is He thirsts; for this it is He appears before thee so heavily wearied and athirst; not that He may receive kindnesses of thee, but that He may confer them on thee: He asks in order that thou mayest ask of Him; for it is not a Jew, but the good Samaritan Himself that yearns over thee!

"It was for her faith that He thirsted," says St. Augustine. And Origen, with much depth of thought, "Perhaps it is a sort of dogma, that no one who asks not can receive a Divine gift. And thus the Father exhorts the Saviour Himself in the Psalm to ask, in order that He might give. 'The Lord hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son. Desire of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance; and the utmost parts of the earth for Thy possession.'² And the Saviour saith, 'Ask, and it shall be given you; for every one that asketh receiveth.'³" It is extremely interesting and instructive to trace this principle in our Lord's conduct to this woman, and indeed in all His dealings with mankind, how He draws her on to ask, in order that He may give. "The cup of cold water" given unto Him, "shall not lose its

² Ps. ii. 7, 8.

³ Matt. vii. 7, 8. In Joan. Tom. xiii. 1

reward," and He is seeking to recompense it with an ineffable requital, even "the Cup of Salvation." "*The woman saith unto Him, Sir, Thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; whence hast Thou then this living water?*" Thou speakest of a power of conferring water, which even the greatest of old needed, or they would never have dug this well. "*Art Thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?*" having no other means of obtaining water. St. Chrysostom supposes, that she had already a sort of suspicion of something more than the water of which Jacob and his cattle drank: that she was already apprehending our Lord to be greater than He appeared to be: and even her erroneous conception of His spiritual meaning is not greater than that of Nicodemus, who said, "How can these things be?" and "Can a man be born when he is old?" But her inquiry is more modest and reverential than his: and, indeed, altogether her inquiries appear in strong contrast with the speeches of the Jews, on similar occasions of our Lord's speaking of high and mysterious doctrine. "*Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*" "For with Thee is the well of life:" and of those that shall be with Thee, it is said, "they shall thirst no more," "they shall be satisfied with the plenteousness of Thy house: and Thou shalt give them drink of Thy pleasures as out of the river." "The Lamb shall lead them to the living fountains of water." And even here below, "He that believeth on Me shall never thirst." "This living water is the Holy Spirit,"

says St. Chrysostom, and so also St. Augustin, who explains that "gift of God," of which He spake, as the Holy Spirit. It is the water which Christ will give, the Spirit that proceedeth from the Father and the Son. The fountain of life in mortal man soon fails; but that fountain of life which is in the Spirit never fails, but springs up to immortality; for that fountain no one can fathom, nor know the depth nor the circumference thereof. And this water, of which he that drinks shall thirst again, is a type of all earthly desires, for nothing upon earth can satisfy the cravings of an immortal spirit, which being made for God can find rest in Him alone.

"*The woman*" believing His words, yet in her simplicity not comprehending their import, but thinking of "living water," as water flowing from a fountain, which the words in the Greek might imply,—she makes that request that shall never be made in vain;—she "*saith unto Him, Master, give unto me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.*" Often do men ask, yet know not for what they ask: but if they ask in faith, and ask for that which Christ hath told them to ask, doubtless they shall receive the gift of God beyond what they think or know. Instantly too does she receive the inestimable gift; for our Lord's words in reply of themselves create faith in Him, and "he that believeth in Him shall never thirst." We too, labouring and heavy laden, are daily drawing water that satisfies not; and to such that are labouring and heavy laden Christ says, "Come unto Me, and I will refresh you:" and, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money. Wherefore do ye spend your labour for that which satisfieth not?" "*Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither;*" a command which she

probably afterwards obeyed, for whatever mysterious reason our Lord wished to see the man referred to. *"The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband; in that saidst thou truly."* In what sense the Lord called the man her husband, and yet how it was that he was not truly her husband, is not apparent: it is sufficient to observe, that as no doubt our Lord saw some good thing in her, as in "the sinner" who "loved much," and in the penitent thief who believed much, so is her character throughout marked with good. The gentleness with which she first received the request of a Jewish stranger, her pious memory of the patriarch Jacob, her readiness to believe, her expressions of respect throughout, saying, "Master;" her uncalled-for confession that it was not her husband, and apparent innocence on that subject, when she found herself before a Prophet; her immediate inquiry respecting a point which was evidently nearest her heart, of the most acceptable mode of worshipping God; the fulness of her faith afterwards; and the expressions that show she was evidently one of those who "waited for the consolation of Israel:"—all these things prove, that although like many others she may have been chosen under circumstances apparently the most adverse, yet that her heart was in the main right towards God; the shadow of Gerizim, the mount of blessing, was still upon her: for she had the blessing of the pure in heart, eyes to discern God;—and the blessing of being filled with that righteousness for which she thirsted;—for our Lord thought her worthy of high and mysterious discourse; and even made unto her a most unwonted and full revelation of Himself as the

Christ. "She asks not," says St. Chrysostom, "of health, or of riches, but immediately of doctrines of faith." She honoured the patriarch, but "already," says the same writer, "she prefers Him to Jacob: as if saying, I need not this fountain, if I may but obtain that water." And again, "the woman immediately believed, and showed herself more wise than Nicodemus; and not only more wise, but also more courageous. For he, although he heard many such things, neither invited any one else, nor himself spake with confidence. But she takes on her the office of an Apostle, announcing it to all, and inviting them to Jesus."

"The woman saith unto Him, Master, I perceive that Thou art a Prophet." And immediately she hastens to the object of her doubts. *"Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."* Our fathers, i. e. the Patriarchs of old, as Jacob who built an altar there⁴; and possibly she might allude to Sanballat afterwards, who built a temple on the mount. Of Joshua also we read, that he "made an ordinance in Shechem:" . . . "and took a great stone and set it up there under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of the Lord⁵:" that celebrated "oak by Shechem," where Jacob hid the idols and earrings⁶; where Abimelech afterwards gathered "the men of Shechem⁷," while Jotham addressed them from Mount Gerizim, which stood so near. *"Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe Me, that the hour cometh when neither in this mountain,"* as exclusively His chosen place, *"nor yet at Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father."* The kingdom of Heaven is at hand, and with its coming even the Temple itself and all that appertains to its worship,

⁴ Gen. xxxiii. 20.

⁵ Josh. xxiv. 26.

⁶ Gen. xxxv. 4.

⁷ Judges ix. 6.

and the distinction altogether between Jew and Gentile, shall be at an end. But hitherto theirs is the right worship, for "*ye worship ye know not what ;*" neither Law nor Prophets are yours to teach you what to worship, for ye have neither the sacrificial ordinances of Moses whom ye profess to acknowledge, nor the more spiritual teaching of the Prophets, which ye own not ; but the Jews have both. "*We*"—speaking of Himself also in the person of a Jew, as He fulfilled all the righteousness of legal worship—" *We know what we worship ; for salvation is of the Jews.*" Much every way is theirs, for theirs are "the oracles of God⁸," "to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the service of God, and the promises : whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ" comes¹. Yet all these are but the shadows of good things to be. "*But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth. For the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit ; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.*" Not by the mere letter of the commandments, but with that love of God which shall fulfil those commandments in the spirit : not with those rites, such as circumcision, and burnt-offerings, and incense, and ablutions, which are but the shadows ; but with that truth which they signify : with all things which pertain to the true Sacrifice and the true Tabernacle. The true circumcision, which is "that of the heart, not in the letter, but in the spirit," by "ministers, not of the letter, but of the spirit:" and by all those sacramental ordinances of the Church, in which will be found the spirit and truth of those things which

⁸ Rom. iii. 2.

¹ Ibid. ix. 4, 5.

were foreshadowed by the Law. When, as the Prophet Malachi foretold, "from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same . . . in every place incense shall be offered unto My Name, and a pure offering²." "*The woman*"—"made giddy," says Chrysostom, "by the loftiness of the sublime truths which He disclosed,"—perceived that He spake of the coming in of a new dispensation, and of things exceedingly Divine which she could not comprehend: but she had been accustomed to look forward to the coming of that Great Prophet, Whom Moses had spoken of, as one that should solve her difficulties, and was hoping, though a Samaritan, to be taught by Him and accepted of Him. "*The woman saith unto Him, I know that Messiah cometh*" (*Which is called Christ*, adds the Evangelist); "*when He shall have come, He will tell us all things.*" Unlike the Jews she was looking in faith to Him, by Whom she was most willing to be taught of better things than she knew: and unlike His mode of dealing with the Jews,—"*Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am He.*"

And others were now coming up, which indicated that she was speaking to one who had disciples attending on him, as their Master and Teacher. "*And upon this His disciples came, and wondered that He talked with the woman.*" For they had yet, and long after this, to learn that the alien and the stranger, and despised Samaritans, and women and children, as representing more especially human weakness, were the more peculiar objects of His compassionate care. He was seeking those that were lost, as the good Shepherd, bearing them on His shoulders, and carrying the lambs in His arms; and it was this His humility and tenderness, in a Teacher and Prophet so

² Mal. i. 11.

great and Divine, that astonished them. "*Yet no one said*" unto Him, "*What seekest Thou? or Why talkest Thou with her?*" This Evangelist was himself probably one of them who in silent wonder looked to Him; and knew not what to think, yet hesitated to ask; marvelling as the woman herself had done, but not expressing like her their feelings. But their compassionate Lord needed not that any should ask, and Himself hastened to solve by degrees their unspoken doubts.

"*The woman therefore left her waterpot, and departed into the city: and saith unto the men, Come, behold a man, which hath told me all things whatever I did. Is not this the Christ?*" She left her waterpot;—as the disciples their nets; as Levi the seat of custom; as Mary forgot serving offices, absorbed in the contemplation of Christ's words, having chosen the one thing needful. She had left her waterpot, for she had found the Living Water; so different was her ready faith to that of the Jews; and the simple-hearted men of that city also were not less obedient to this Divine call from Heaven. "*They came therefore out of the city; and were coming unto Him.*" The present city indeed is as much as a mile from that well, but it is supposed that the city formerly extended far nearer: a late traveller has described the exquisite loveliness of an evening he witnessed as he approached this city, and lingered long around its precincts, as if still retaining something of that fertility for which they were so famed of old: and a similar scene may we suppose on this memorable eve, for the season was now in that country far advancing in the spring. But more lovely in the eyes of Him that was watching for the Redemption of mankind, were the signs of eternal summer that were appearing.

"In the mean time His disciples asked Him, saying, Master, eat;"—in tender concern for Him: but He was thinking of far greater matters, and wishing to explain to them His reason for conversing with the woman, and the effect His words had with her, which they were now about to witness. It was moreover His custom not only to give solemn benediction to God when He ate bread, but also ever to turn the mention of such bodily wants to spiritual and Divine things; fulfilling always what He has enjoined us by His Apostle, "whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God." *"But He saith unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought Him ought to eat?"* For not only did the Jews and Nicodemus, and the Samaritan woman, but His disciples also, even to the last, seem to be continually misapprehending His words, while they thought of the literal meaning only; for by the use of figurative expressions and dark sayings He arrests their attention, and thereby leads them on to high and spiritual things. But in the mean time this talking among themselves respecting His words, while they feared to ask Him, of which so many instances occur, sets forth, in a lively manner, their reverence for Him; and may represent the state of good men at all times, inquiring with each other of the dark sayings of His word: "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it³." *"Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me; and to finish His work:"* using words similar to those of him who is set before us as an example of patience and suffering affliction, "I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food⁴." For

³ Mal. iii. 16.

⁴ Job xxiii. 12.

“man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

“*Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest?*” By this figure our Lord Himself speaks in like manner as He does by the Law ; the Passover was literally the offering of the first-fruits, the Pentecost was literally the ingathering ; but these were typical of Christ, the First-fruits of the Dead at Easter, and the fuller harvest of the Church at Whitsuntide : and here also the expression seems to have the same twofold meaning. “*Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields ; for they are already white unto the harvest.*” I hunger indeed for the souls of men, as one that now is sowing the seed, and comforting his present need by the proverbial saying, that after four months will be the harvest : and yet it is not so altogether with Me, for I have already to partake of the fruits and to satisfy My need : and though I be but as the sower, I have already to rejoice with them that reap ; for behold there approach already the fruits of the seed sown : “the fields are already white,” the Sun of righteousness hath arisen upon them. “*And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal.*” And blessed are ye who shall have to gather in these fruits into the celestial barn, for “they who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever :” and I also shall rejoice together with you, though now faint and hungry ; for “He that now goeth on His way weeping, and beareth good seed, shall doubtless come again with joy, and bear his sheaves with him.” He shall come again from the grave with all His Saints, and rejoice together with you : “*that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.*” And not Himself only shall return, but all those His Prophets

of old, who with Him have laboured in sowing the good seed, who have laboured through the toil and the heat of the day ; while ye are called at the eleventh hour, in the evening, to gather in the fruit of their labours. It is as in the Transfiguration, which was a type of the Resurrection, when, as Origen observes, Moses and Elias, who sowed the seed ; and Peter and James, and John, who were the reapers, rejoiced together, seeing Him, and partaking of His glory. Both together are found in Him. For He Himself, we may add, sowed with them that sow, and reaped with them that reap : as He is Himself the Lord of the Harvest. It is not in things spiritual, says St. Chrysostom, as in things perishable ; for in the latter, if one soweth and another reapeth, they would not both rejoice together, for he that sowed would grieve that he had lost the fruits of his labour in reaping not. But here they who reap not what they have sown, shall rejoice with them that reap, and partake of the same reward⁵. *“And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour : other men laboured ; and ye are entered into their labours.”* Already, while they baptized with Christ's Baptism, more flocked unto their Baptism than unto John, who had laboured so long in the works of repentance ; but he rejoiced with them that reaped, and in hearing the Bridegroom's voice. And these Samaritans that were approaching were already the first-fruits of that harvest which they should reap among the Gentiles : the Patriarchs and the Prophets had long since prepared them to look for the coming of the Messiah ; and the testimony of the woman, who was already made radiant with the presence of Christ, had warmed the seed sown.

⁵ In Joan. Hom. xxxiv. 2.

But they are not Apostles only who are spoken of in Scripture as the reapers,—the reapers that gather from the four winds,—but the Angels, in the Parable. And perhaps in this case the Apostles also, as preparatory to that the great Harvest, would be considered as those that now sow in tears; but they are not yet prepared to hear of those sufferings of the Cross, where Christ shall with them sow in tears, before that great Harvest which the Angels shall reap. Thus is it with all Scripture, the earthly Canaan was deliverance from bondage, the land of rest and peace, having the enjoyment of good things long promised; while others had laboured, and they had entered into their fruits. In another sense, that earthly Canaan was itself but the bondage and servitude of the Law; preparatory to the full adoption and sonship and inheritance of the Gospel; but Christians are in possession of those good things. Yet, in another sense, and with respect to the future, Christians also themselves are in a state of banishment and bereavement, “waiting for the adoption, the redemption of the body,” and “the glorious liberty of the children of God.” So that in all cases throughout, labour and refreshment, tribulation and rejoicing, mourning and consolation, are combined together, until day and night shall have an end. And thus in the labours of the Gospel, he that soweth and he that reapeth rejoice together. “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper; and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop new wine⁶.” Origen, with exquisite beauty, has applied the whole passage to the Scriptures, as the field in which the seed is sown; when at the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, the true Light hath

⁶ Amos ix. 13.

shined upon them, and made them already white unto the harvest. According to this analogy, the fields in which the seed hath been cast are the Scriptures of the Law and the Prophets, which were not white before the presence of the Word, but became so to those who are disciples of the Son of God, and obey Him when He says, "Lift up your eyes, and look upon the fields, that they are already white unto the harvest." May we therefore, as genuine disciples of Christ, lift up our eyes, and look upon the fields which have been sown by Moses and the Prophets; that we may behold their whiteness, and in what manner we even now may reap them, and gather their fruit unto life eternal, together with the hope of receiving wages from the Lord of the harvest. That he that soweth, and he that reapeth, shall rejoice together in that future life, when sorrow and sadness and sighing shall have fled away, every one will confess, who hath read, that "many shall come from the east, and from the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of Heaven." But if any doubt whether every one that soweth and every one that reapeth rejoice together even now, let him observe that the Transfiguration was in a certain sense the harvest, when Jesus appeared in glory, not only with the reapers, Peter, and James, and John, who ascended with Him, but also with those that sowed, Moses and Elias. For together with these they rejoice, beholding the glory of the Son of God, which Moses and Elias had not before seen, enlightened to so great a degree by the Father, and enlightening those that behold Him, as they now see Him together with the Apostles. "But both rejoice together, having one end laid up for both, by One God, in One Christ, through One Holy Spirit."

⁷ In Ev. Joan. Tom. xiii. 46, 47.

“And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on Him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.” This is the evidence of the heart-searching God, as He will be revealed to us all, “telling us all that ever we did.” And this, their readiness to believe in Him whom they had not seen, was already a part of that childlike mind, like Nathanael’s, which only needed further evidence for the full persuasion of faith. *“So when the Samaritans were come unto Him, they besought Him that He would tarry with them; and He abode there two days.”* As the number two ever implies imperfection, and waits for a third, so this, His stay for two days, was but preparatory to the day of their salvation which approached; the third day, when the door of faith shall be opened to the Gentiles. He was not in this, says St. Chrysostom, acceding to their request, for they wished for His continued abode, but that He declined, staying only for two days. But may we not think it was rather in full compliance with all their request, loving to be constrained, and ever yielding to constraint? as with the disciples at Emmaus, when He was as if He would have gone further, yet on being asked to abide with them He stays; as He ever graciously fulfils the request of all. *“And many more believed because of His own word: and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.”* Such even now, as St. Austin observes, is the course of God’s dealing, first by report, and then by the presence of Christ. First by tradition are men brought to Christ, and then they find in the Scriptures the full manifestation of the Word. Such is the type of the call of the Gentiles, like the Queen of

Sheba of old: "And she said unto the King, It was a true report that I heard, of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom exceedeth the fame which I heard. Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel⁸."

And if indeed, as Origen, Augustin, and others suppose, this woman is a type of the Church, may we not carry on the figurative application to the appearing of Christ Himself hereafter? Here we see but as in a glass darkly, taught by report, and through His Church, of His wonderful sayings; but there shall we—there shall they who are admitted into that blessed number—see "face to face," "shall see Him as He is," and "shall ever be with the Lord." There shall they come no longer to draw water which satisfies not, for "the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall lead them to living fountains of waters:" "they shall hunger no more, and thirst no more." Blessed are they who can ask Him to come, to come and abide with them, Him Who will tell us whatever we have done; they who can come to the Light that their deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God!

⁸ 1 Kings x. 6—9.

SECTION VI

THE NOBLEMAN FROM CAPERNAUM

THESE strangers had indeed welcomed Him with hospitality, and received Him with faith, but there was a vast and mysterious truth, to which He had to bear testimony, as manifested in manifold and incomprehensible ways in all His dealings with mankind ; as if full of some dark prophecy, which He expressed by a proverbial expression, of which the Evangelist here introduces the mention. *“Now after two days He departed thence, and went into Galilee. For Jesus Himself testified, that a Prophet hath no honour in his own country.”* But there is some difficulty in explaining to what it here more directly refers: the word “for,” seems to connect it with the preceding sentence, whereas it is immediately followed by the statement, that the Galileans received Him with welcome. It can hardly be, as St. Chrysostom supposes, intended to signify that He went into Galilee in distinction from His own city Capernaum ; for Capernaum was itself in Galilee, and had not yet been the place of His abode, or called His own city. Nor can it be fulfilled, as Origen explains it, in this, that He was leaving His own people, that of Judea, and going into an alien country, that of Galilee ; for He was Himself called a Galilean. St. Augustin, again, takes it that He was going into Galilee, His own country, in distinction from Samaria ; yet even this does not altogether explain the expression ; but it is spoken in a manner that embraces all these interpretations. He had

to leave these kind strangers and to depart into Galilee, there to be rejected of His own countrymen. And yet even these Galileans received Him with welcome compared to what He had met with in Judea—His own sacred nation, to whom He was more especially sent. But it was at Nazareth, where He had been brought up, that He Himself twice declared this proverb, as the other three Evangelists record; and on the first occasion it was on His opening the preaching of His Kingdom there, shortly after this His coming into Galilee. It was this that the Evangelist seems to have had in his mind in stating it at this time, although it contained within it fulfilments so many and great. Those who were nearest to Him treated Him the worst of all: Bethlehem and Nazareth, His native places, both laid plots against His life; nor did Capernaum repent for all His mighty works that had been done there; nor did Galilee receive Him; and His own city Jerusalem, and the Holy Nation, and His own Priesthood neglected Him; and, one of His own disciples was the worst of His enemies. Such are indications on the surface of the meaning of this great prophecy, “A man’s foes shall be they of his own household.” We must seek a meaning in this saying, says Origen, worthy of Jesus bearing witness. Now the country of the Prophets was in Judea, and it is evident that they had no honour from the Jews, “they were stoned, sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword,” and the like¹. And the Jews are reproved by Him who said unto them, “Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?” who also at last slew the Prophet above all, for Whose sake the Prophets were Prophets³. And in a manner still more striking speaks

¹ Heb. xi. 37.² Acts vii. 52.³ In Ev. Joan. Tom. xiii. 54.

St. Austin, "Observe that nation of the Jews, dispersed over all the world, and torn up by the roots; observe their boughs broken off, rent, and scattered, and dry, by the breaking off of which the wild olive hath been grafted in. Look to the people of the Jews, and what do they say? He whom ye adore and worship was our Brother. And we may answer, 'A Prophet hath no honour in his own country ⁴.'"

In making this statement, therefore, the Evangelist alludes not to any transient and immediate effect of Christ's appearing in Galilee, for he adds, "*When therefore He came into Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things which He did in Jerusalem at the feast. For they also had gone to the feast.*" The Jews in Judea had rejected Him, but the despised Galileans received Him on account of His miracles; but better than they were the hated Samaritans, for they believed in Him, and received Him as the Christ, without miracles. "*So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where He made the water wine.*" This Cana seems to have been a small place, and no further occurrence is now mentioned as having taken place there; and we may reverently ask what was the reason of our Lord's coming here? It may have been that some family connexion of our Lord's Mother, as before alluded to, drew Him hither again. But we would rather look to higher reasons, and it may be explained by the analogy of His usual dealings with mankind, which seems to be, that He first prepares men to receive Him, and then He Himself appears before them. Thus when He wrought His first miracle at the marriage feast, He had first prepared His disciples, who witnessed it and believed. And now that

⁴ In Joan. Ev. Tr. xvi. 3.

miracle had had time to turn the hearts of men, and kindle their faith towards Him; in like manner as Judea had been prepared by the Baptist, and Galilee by the accounts of the miracles in Judea; and we find soon after on His appearing at Nazareth, that that place had then been prepared by what they heard of His miracles at Capernaum. For this cause He comes to Cana. And when He was last at Cana, it was observed that He went for a few days to Capernaum after the miracle, for which no reason was assigned, but the fruits of it may have been the coming of this Nobleman. And this invitation of the Nobleman may have opened the door of faith at Capernaum also, while the miracle wrought in that place may have prepared the way for His fuller manifestation there.

“And there was a certain Nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum.” This term Nobleman, or kingly person, as it is literally, is usually supposed to indicate that he belonged to the court of Herod Antipas, who had now cast John into prison; and if so, our Lord both begins and ends His miracles of mercy for the sake of His enemies. Origen together with this supposition mentions another, that he might have been one of Cæsar’s household, then transacting business in Judea; but it appears far more probable that he was a Jew. Yet there seems no reason for supposing it to have been Chuza, Herod’s steward, as some imagine whose wife was afterwards ministering unto our Lord. *“When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went unto Him, and besought Him that He would come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death. Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe. The Nobleman saith unto Him, Sir, come down ere my child die.*

Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way, thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him; and he went his way." Here there are two circumstances worthy of remark—first, that our Lord, instead of receiving the request with approbation, appears to speak with some complaint, as if the mode of entreaty indicated a want of faith; secondly, that He did not as usual grant the exact request by going down to the place, as He did in other cases, and in one very similar to this, when the Ruler Jairus asked Him to come and lay His hand on his daughter, who was at the point of death; but here He exerts a greater power than is asked for, by healing at a distance, when He is asked to come down. But it may be that there is a great variety in our Lord's dealings with men, although one uniform character may be seen throughout; as, for instance, when He requires one to follow Him without returning to bid adieu to his family, and declines the proffered attendance of another altogether⁵; and it is evident that in all these cases He was dealing with the heart of each, as He read their secret thoughts and characters, rather than their words. There is likewise a great contrast between this case and that of the Centurion in the following year at Capernaum. The Centurion begged Him not to come, but He went; the Nobleman entreats Him to come down, but He goes not. In the one case it was a servant, and that of a Gentile, to whom He did such honour; in this it was the son of a kingly Jew. The faith of the Centurion was very great; that of the Nobleman apparently but weak and imperfect: he thought Christ's bodily Presence was necessary, nor contemplates any power of His being able to raise the dead. At such a request he is gently reprov'd, and led on to a

⁵ See The Ministry, Second Year, P. ii. § xvi.

faith more worthy ; even as Martha, the sister of Lazarus, when she implied something of the same kind, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died⁶;" and Jairus, also, on hearing that his daughter was dead, was thus tenderly watched and encouraged. It is evident that if this Nobleman had believed, like the Samaritans, that He was indeed the Saviour of the world, he would not have attempted to draw Him down to that distance ; and though he had faith sufficient to receive His words, yet this his faith in our Lord's declaration was not fully confirmed till he had the report of his servant. St. Chrysostom, Augustin, and Gregory, all speak of him as weak and imperfect in faith. He believed, says St. Chrysostom, but not fully and soundly, which is evident from his inquiring of his servants, "At what time the fever left him : " as desirous to ascertain whether it was of its own accord, or by the command of Christ. And the request at first, observes the same writer, was as if Christ was not aware of the state of the child, or could not deliver him after death. Therefore He reproves and touches his conscience, healing thereby the father's diseased mind even more than the son ; and teaching us to attend to Him more for His teaching than for signs. For signs are not for the faithful, but for the unbelieving and dull⁷.

But it may be observed that our Lord speaks in the plural number, "unless ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe ; " as if it was addressed not to the Nobleman only, but to the peculiar state of heart in those around Him ; to ask for His aid and to receive His miracles was a part of faith, but it was a greater proof of faith to believe in Him without such signs and miracles⁸. St. Augustin

⁶ John xi. 21.

⁷ In Joan. Hom. ad loc.

⁸ See Study of Gospels, P. ii. § 4.

supposes it was spoken in contrast to the Samaritans, who received Him without miracles, and the circumstance was of itself a proof of what the Evangelist had said, that "a Prophet hath not honour in his own country." It was said especially of the Jews, as contrasted with the Centurion and other Gentiles, so rich in faith. It was a prophetic type of what is now, when the Gentiles, like the Samaritans, receive Him on testimony without miracles: the Jews, who saw His mighty works, received Him not. To believe without signs and wonders was the state into which He was about to bring the whole world. The words, indeed, probably contain some peculiar and emphatic reference to the Jewish nation; for this appears to be the first Jew mentioned as asking for a sign, which was afterwards seen to be the very characteristic and description of that people, "the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom." And when the Pharisees demanded a sign, Christ "sighed deeply in spirit," in a manner that seemed expressive of some lamentable prophetic thought with respect to them. They shall in consequence have the sign of the Prophet Jonas, and "the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven;" "They shall look on Him Whom they pierced."

"*And as he was now going down,*"—for it was a continual descent all the way from Cana to Capernaum, which lay on the sea-coast far below,—"*his servants met him, and told him saying, Thy son liveth. Then inquired he of them the hour when he began to amend;*" being weak in faith, and hardly venturing to suppose it could have been so instantaneous and miraculous. "*And they said unto him, Yesterday, at the seventh hour, the fever left him.*" The seventh is the number, says Origen, appropriate to rest. "*So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in*

which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth ; and himself believed and his whole house." It is evident from this that the father did not return home on the same day in which he saw our Lord, although the distance from Cana to Capernaum was only about three and twenty miles. This is another indication that the numbering of the hours in St. John corresponds with our own time ; and that this seventh hour of which he speaks was at seven o'clock in the evening, and not, as the seventh hour would imply in either of the other Evangelists, at one o'clock in the day⁹. For it would have been strange indeed, if our Lord had thus spoken at one o'clock in the day, that a father should not return to his child till the following day ; and still more extraordinary in such a case, that the servants should not have arrived on the same day with the welcome news ; but if it occurred so late in the evening, it is what one would naturally expect, that early in the following morning the father and his servants should meet each other on the way.

"This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when He was come out of Judea into Galilee." It is evident that Galilee is connected in some very mysterious manner with the establishment of our Lord's Kingdom, both from the emphatic mention of it after the Resurrection, and from its being the chief scene of His ministry before. And it has been already noticed what a remarkable and significative type of His Kingdom was the marriage feast at Cana before recorded. An observation of Origen's at this point bears much on this view : "We have said before, that our Saviour's two visits to Cana may be taken as a type of His two visits to the earth, which has become His 'possession,' (as the word Cana signifies,) from His having

⁹ See pp. 281. 353 ; and The Passion, p. 255.

received all power in Heaven and on earth. In His former visit, after the laver He cheers us who eat and drink with Him by giving us power to drink of the wine, which was before water, till Jesus had changed it. But at His second visit He releases us from the fever, at the time of the Judgment, with which He is entrusted of God; releasing from the fever, and healing entirely the son of the kingly man, whether it be of Abraham, or some one else so called¹." And the same writer proceeds, after his manner, to apply the same also to the Christian in this life. But we may observe, in furtherance of the same deep thought of Origen's, it is not in the place which is given unto Christ for a "possession," it is not in the place where the Marriage Supper is, that the youth is in a fever and dying, but in the city far below; and from Cana goes forth the word of Christ to heal him:—from the Church of God, which is His "possession,"—or from Heaven itself, goes forth the Word, and heals him who lieth sick in the world below.

SECTION VII

THE JUBILEE ANNOUNCED AT NAZARETH

WE have no further circumstance respecting our Lord mentioned after the last recorded, before that of His appearing at Nazareth; but it is evident from this account at Nazareth, that remarkable miracles took place during the interval; and at that very place where we find our Lord had on two occasions been preparing the way to the

¹ In Ev. Joan. xiii. 60.

manifestation of Himself—at Capernaum. For at Nazareth express mention is made of things already done in Capernaum ; and before the narrative of what occurs at Nazareth, St. Luke prefaces it by saying, after mentioning His retiring to Galilee, *“And there went out a fame of Him throughout all the region round about. And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all. And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up.”* He appears now to have been long absent from this place of His early abode ; there is, indeed, no distinct mention of His having returned there since His Baptism ; although He may have done so on a day or two preceding the marriage feast at Cana ; but from that place He then went to Capernaum and from thence to Jerusalem, so that even in that case nearly a year had transpired. And now as an opening had been made for Him in Galilee by the report of the miracles performed in Jerusalem, so at Nazareth, although He does not appear to have as yet wrought any miracle there, yet a preparation is made for Him even there also, by their having heard what had been done at Capernaum. However, as far as the Evangelical narrative of our Lord’s ministry goes, Nazareth is like the vestibule of His Kingdom. No doubt He yearned with human and Divine affection over this seat of His childhood ; and by His thus beginning at Nazareth He teaches us, that those natural affections for home and kindred which He has implanted in us, may rightly be made the first objects of Divine charity. Thus His first miracle was performed at the request of His mother ; four of His disciples were of His kindred according to the flesh ; Nazareth was one of the first places of His teaching. Theophylact thus speaks of it as an example to us, that we should first benefit and instruct our brethren, and then extend our kind actions to

the rest of our friends². And St. Ambrose thinks it necessary to excuse His not performing miracles there, lest any one should suppose that one ought not to love one's country. He could not, he says, but love His own countrymen Who loved all. "Nor was His country without Divine benefits; for what greater miracle could there be than His being brought up among them³?" But whatever secret reasons there were in Divine Providence for selecting the places of our Lord's earthly abode and manifestation, these places do not themselves appear worthy of His preference from any regard shown to Him. Not only do we know this to have been signally the case with Capernaum and other cities of Galilee, but also with Nazareth; for at our Lord's return here some time afterwards, we find that "He marvelled because of their unbelief⁴," and that He could not work miracles there on account of it. And now neither the holiness of His life, which must have been known to them from His childhood, nor the report of His subsequent miracles, appear to have had any deep or quickening effect upon them. The reflection is a very awful one for those who have the Gospels familiarly in their hands.

St. Augustin, indeed, supposes that this must without doubt be the same circumstance which St. Matthew and St. Mark record at a much later period; but he alleges no reason excepting this, that miracles are there spoken of as having already taken place at Capernaum, of which there is as yet no mention⁵. If this should be the case, that it is the same occasion which all three Evangelists speak of we must account for the introduction of it by St. Luke in this place, by supposing that he is describing first of all

² Aur. Cat. Ox. Tr.

³ In Luc. lib. iv. 47.

⁴ Mark vi. 6.

⁵ De Cons. Evan. lib. ii. 90.

our Lord's preaching to the Jews in their synagogues, according to the invariable practice of the Apostles, as described by St. Luke in the Acts. It is certainly remarkable that St. Luke records no teaching of our Lord for the first year but what took place in the synagogues: first of all in that of Nazareth; secondly, in that of Capernaum, when the demoniac is healed; thirdly, when the paralytic is healed, which is also in the synagogue on the Sabbath day. And the other miracle he records of the leper is strictly of this character, for the leper is sent to the Priest. As if our Lord had maintained the same order in His ministry which the Apostles so carefully afterwards adhered to; whereas in St. Matthew the Sermon on the Mount is at once spoken publicly, as common to all.

"And, as His custom was, He entered on the Sabbath day into the Synagogue." For the worship of the Jewish Synagogue appears to have been but on one day in seven; whereas on the coming in of the true Sabbath of God, seven days in the seven, and seven times in each day of the seven, were appointed by the Church for religious worship. *"And He stood up for to read;"* when all the people one would suppose stood up with Him; *"And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up⁶."* *"Bending Himself,"* says St. Ambrose, *"to all humble services, not even the office of a reader did He despise."* *"And there was delivered unto Him the book of the Prophet Esaias,"* the Evangelical Prophet providentially brought to Him by the ruler of the Synagogue: *"And when He had unfolded the book He found the place where it was written."* *"Not by accident,"* says Origen, *"but by that providence by which all the hairs of our head are*

⁶ Neh. viii. 5.

numbered, and without which not a sparrow falleth into the net." But may we not rather understand that He looked for and so found the passage, where the Prophet had spoken of the fulfilment of that great Jubilee by the new and spiritual dispensation of the kingdom? for it is said "He found the place," as if by intention and search. "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the poor. He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted.*" Here our Lord opens His kingdom as the Anointed Priest, and Prophet, and King; this is the Anointing of the true Christ, not with oil and external symbol, but by the Spirit given unto Him without measure; and as the year of the Jubilee was especially for the sake of the poor and oppressed⁷, it is more particularly good tidings unto them. Humbling Himself in all things as the Son of Man, as Man is He anointed; as Man is the Spirit upon Him; as Man is He sent; as perfect God and Man; thus did He delight in this His humiliation for our sakes. Yet His Godhead breaks forth and comes out in every word: for these things are the attributes of God Himself, "He healeth those that are broken in heart, and giveth medicine to heal their sickness⁸." And again, "the Lord looseth men out of prison; the Lord giveth sight to the blind⁹." And as St. Ambrose observes, the Three Persons of the Ever-Blessed Trinity are mysteriously introduced; as They are present at His Baptism and Transfiguration. It is He that is sent; and His Father that sends; and the Holy Spirit is upon Him. The whole passage likewise is of Himself as God, and as speaking Himself by His own Prophet. "*To proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind.*" The word "proclaim," which is usually translated "preach,"

⁷ Lev. xxv.⁸ Ps. cxlvii. 3.⁹ Ps. cxlvi. 7.

has here its immediate reference to the herald, "in the day of the Atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land¹," which is the proclamation of the year of the Jubilee. But here all the description has an allusion to the well-known marks of the Messiah. "I the Lord have called Thee in righteousness," "to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house²." "By the blood of thy Covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water. Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope³." "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened⁴." "*To set at liberty them that are bruised*," as with the heavy weight of their chains. "*To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord*," the Sabbathical Year, the Sabbath of Sabbaths, or rather that in which all Sabbaths and Sabbathical Years and Jubilees are themselves fulfilled, the Coming of Him Who is Himself the soul's rest; the eternal New Year which needeth not sun nor moon; made up of twelve moons that wane not, the twelve Tribes: the City built on the "twelve foundations" of "the twelve Apostles of the Lamb."

The whole is shortly expressed by St. Peter, "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; Who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil⁵." And as St. Ambrose eloquently explains this passage, "He is anointed with Spiritual oil and celestial power; that He might bedew the poverty of our human condition with the eternal treasure of Resurrection, turn away the captivity of the soul, illuminate blindness of eyes, proclaim the year of the Lord diffused over perpetual seasons,

¹ Lev. xxv. 9.² Isa. xlii. 7.³ Zech. ix. 12.⁴ Isa. xxxv. 5.⁵ Acts x. 38.

which know not return to the circle of labour, but vouchsafe to man a continuation of fruit and repose⁶." The prophecy indeed is remarkable, as containing within it so lively a description of our Lord's Ministry both of words and of works, and as showing the singular correspondence between the two; so that every part of the account might with equal propriety be applied to either, to His healing of bodily maladies, or those of the soul. To His teaching there is especial reference in the type, as the Law was read in the year of Jubilee. The manifold significations indeed in every part of the description are quite wonderful: as the Sun in His going forth exhibits his image more or less clearly in a variety of objects: throughout the whole there abounds that remarkable profusion of sign and token, wherewith God is pleased to reveal His doings to man: images blending with each other; type and antitype, distinct yet combining, through progressive and ulterior fulfilments; while sign and thing signified, type and antitype take the place of each other: what appeared the substance, being itself foreshadowed, now appears but the shadow of coming truth, and that again lost in the greatness of things spiritual. The first fulfilment is of course in the Jewish Year of release proclaimed on the day of Atonement; and the other fulfilment, to which the Prophet seems to refer, is that great type of the Resurrection, the return from captivity, "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Sion, then were we like unto them that dream." Restoration from the darkness of the dungeon to the light of day was indeed like recovery of sight to the blind; and the broken-hearted in spirit and bruised in body might be restored: but what recovery of sight was there

⁶ In Luc. lib. iv. 45.

to those whose eyes were put out in the dungeon? There was therefore a higher fulfilment. And this was found when Christ opened the eyes of the blind, and went about healing bodily diseases: showing thereby a coming release of the natural body derived from Adam; in weakness and dishonour, when it should be raised again, the spiritual body derived from the Second Adam in glory and in power. But as the return from the Captivity was preparatory to Christ's coming: so this appearing of Christ was but preparatory to the higher and ulterior fulfilments, by which He opens the doors of Hell, and leads captivity captive, receiving gifts for men. Thus is it truly "good tidings to the poor," or as it is in Isaiah, to "the meek;" for "the poor in spirit inherit the kingdom of Heaven:" the broken-hearted are healed, when they "that mourn shall be comforted:" "recovery of sight" is in Him Who hath "called" us "out of darkness into His marvellous light," from the darkness and prison of the soul;—for to them who "sat in darkness, in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up;"—"release to the captive" under the Law and in the bondage of sin, by Him Who gives the invitation, "Come unto Me all ye that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "To set at liberty them that are bruised" in soul by Satan, as the maniac boy was in body: to bind up their spiritual wounds, pouring in oil and wine, like the good Samaritan, and bear them on His own beast to a place of rest.

And encouraged by all these past and general mercies, the sinner to whom Christ is manifested, may by particular application approach Him. May I be meek, that Thy good tidings may be good tidings unto me: may I be so broken-hearted at the sense of my wounds, that I

may cry to Thee for help, while now it is the acceptable Year! I am sold under sin, and feel the weight of my fetters, bring me forth into the glorious liberty of the children of God. I also am blind, lighten mine eyes that I sleep not in death. They who have been long in prison learn to love their chains and hate the light of day, let it not be so with me. For now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. And though it is written, "Mercy and truth shall go before Thy face:" yet it is added, "blessed are the people that can rejoice in Thee, they shall walk in the light of Thy countenance." For Thy good tidings are not good tidings unto all. The eyes of all are bent upon Thee throughout the world, and, like the men of Nazareth, they seek for a sign—let it not be so with me!

Thus far our Lord has declared the nature of His kingdom; there is another important matter connected with the same, the mystery of the calling of the Gentiles. "*And having folded up the Book, and given it to the attendant, He sat down.*" For sitting was the posture for teaching: and we find in the Acts of the Apostles, that not only were the Scriptures read every Sabbath day in the Synagogues⁷, but also that after they were read, words of instruction were addressed to the people⁸. "*And the eyes of all in the Synagogue were earnestly bent upon Him;*" as expecting to hear Him speak. "The eyes of all wait upon Thee, O Lord, and Thou givest them their meat in due season." "*And He began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.*" Such was the character of His most gracious and affectionate opening of His Gospel in His own village. "*And all bare Him witness, and marvelled at the words of grace*

⁷ Acts xv. 21. ⁸ Acts xiii. 15; xvii. 2. 17; xviii. 4; xix. 3. 9.

that proceeded out of His mouth," so full were His very words of healing and unspeakable goodness. "Thou art fairer than the children of men; full of grace are Thy lips, because God hath blessed Thee for ever." And the effect is described as remarkably similar to what it was when about a year afterwards He came among them, as the other two Evangelists record; and the difference also is very observable, for on this occasion mention is made of His "words of grace," on the next of His wisdom and power. For this is His mode of dealing with mankind, first by gentle and gracious advances, and then by more awful manifestations of Himself. But the effect at both times is the same. "*And they said, Is not this the Son of Joseph?*" As in the other, Is not this the Son of the carpenter? and His mother called Mary? and His brethren and kindred are they not all with us? And "they were offended at Him⁹." Even so it was now;—but the Lord knew their hearts, and met their unbelieving objections. "*And He said unto them, Ye will surely say unto Me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself. Such things as we have heard done in Capernaum, do here also in Thine own country.*" As if He had said, You are now considering in your hearts that One Who has power, as ye hear that I have displayed, should first exercise the same for the healing of those more immediately around Him, in His own village. And doubtless such is My desire. For His own kindred after the flesh, and His own countrymen from His Childhood, no doubt did He yearn most of all, as St. Paul describes himself as doing: but these were as those evil and adulterous Jews who asked for a sign; they sought to see miracles, whereas they had not that faith without which it was impossible to work miracles in

⁹ Matt. xiii. 54. 58. Mark vi. 2, 3.

their behalf. Thus was Nazareth, as Origen indeed observes, a type of their nation at large: and now the thought of their heart, "Physician, heal thyself," was like that of the Jews at last, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save:" and even as Satan himself, "if Thou be the Son of God," make bread for Thyself of these stones.

Thus in manifold ways, "He came unto His own, but His own received Him not." Whether or not it be that knowledge of the truth without faith, has some peculiar power in hardening the heart; so it is that it has become almost a proverb that they who have the highest means of grace are the furthest from God. Thus on both occasions, when our Lord came to His own City of Nazareth, it was to declare this principle. "*And He said, Verily, I say unto you, that no prophet is accepted in his own country.*" Throughout the Gospels, the highest instances of faith on record, are those of Gentiles with apparently the least opportunities of knowledge; and as these were but the precursory and preparatory movements to the general coming in of the Gentiles, so were there also gleams of light going before the revelation of this mystery in the Old Testament. "*Of a truth I say unto you, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up for three years and six months, when there was a great famine over all the land: And unto not one of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta,*" a city "*of Sidon, unto a woman*" that was "*a widow.* And many lepers were in Israel at the time of *Eliseus the Prophet; and none of them was cleansed, save Naaman the Syrian.*" "This discourse of our Lord," says St. Ambrose¹, "exhorts us to adore His Divinity,

¹ In Luc. lib. iv. 49.

as showing that no one is healed, but he who with religious observance hath studied health. For Divine benefits are conferred not on those that sleep, but on those that watch." "Why did not the Prophet heal his brethren, while he healed strangers; but that there is a medicine for the will, not for the nation: and the Divine gift is chosen by desire, not by right of nature? Learn, therefore, O Christian, to ask for that which thou desirest to obtain."

As Elijah is supposed to have set forth in type our Lord's Personal Ministry in the flesh, and Elisha His Spiritual Presence in His Church: so these two instances seem to indicate the calling of the Gentiles under both of these dispensations. The "three years and six months" of Elijah may represent our Lord's ministry from His Baptism to His death; when the widowed Church of the Gentiles, the "publicans and sinners," received Him, in spiritual hunger and thirst coming unto Him; or rather in His going to them, and finding them half dead with famine, and sustaining them with the spiritual Bread and Oil. Origen, Ambrose, and others, thus speak of this woman as the type of the Church. For three years was Christ seeking fruit on the barren fig-tree of the Synagogue, and found none; then was the famine. For three years did He wander through the land, when "hungry and thirsty, His soul fainted" in Him, in that which was to Him, the true Elijah, a "famine throughout all the land." As St. Chrysostom says of Elijah, "God made him go a long journey, as far as Sidon, in order that having thus seen the famine of the country, he should ask for rain from the Lord;" so Christ wandered through the land, and was moved with compassion for them, seeing them as sheep without a shepherd, and faint by the way;

and fed them. He prayed for rain, and the Heavens were opened; as St. Chrysostom says of Elijah in another place, "He himself, an earthly angel, a heavenly man, who had neither house nor food, nor clothing like others, carries the keys of the heavens on his tongue²." He prayed, and the Heavens were opened, and the Spirit was given. He came down "like rain into a fleece of wool, even as the drops that water the earth." And as before Israel was wet like the dewy fleece, and all the earth was dry; so now all the earth is replenished with dew, but Israel is dried up. Then did "the Heavens pour down righteousness;" "my doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass³." Such was the teaching of the Spirit, and the blessing promised by Malachi, "I will open you the windows of Heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it⁴." St. Ambrose thus spiritually explains the figure, that the opening of the Heavens implies the seeing of Heavenly and eternal mysteries, and the closing of the Heavens by famine, when there was no fruitfulness in knowing Divine things.

And if the history of Elijah sets forth as in a glass darkly one image of this mystery, so does Elisha a little after in greater power the other: when the Church is not found, as in the days of Elijah, a widow, deserted of God and poor; but the rich and honourable Captain comes from afar; and to him Elisha sends forth his servant, though he came not forth himself, with his life-giving command for the baptizing of the Syrian in Jordan: intimating hereby the Baptizing of all nations by the

9 Aur. Cat. in I. uc. ³ Deut. xxxii. 2. ⁴ Chap. iii. 10.

ministers sent forth from Christ, and their coming to the mystical Jordan of Israel. "The people," says St. Ambrose, "before leprous and full of spots, previous to its being baptized in the mystical stream, after the Sacrament of Baptism, washed from stains of body and mind, is no longer leprous, but a virgin without spot or wrinkle." "And as if not his body only, but his soul had been washed also in that stream, and cleansed from his former error," adds the same writer, "he says, he will sacrifice no more to any but God." Yet, alas, as if a type of the Church in the world, he still bows in the temple of Rimmon, though he believes in God. It may further be observed, that as a prophetic type, over and above the more general spiritual fulfilment, has often an incidental literal fulfilment in individual cases under the same ; so the widow of Sarepta, a city of Sidon, to whom Elijah was sent, had a counterpart in the Canaanitish woman, a Syrophœnician, in the parts of Tyre and Sidon, who sought for the crumbs that fall from the Master's table in that spiritual famine, and was replenished. In like manner Naaman the Syrian had his counterpart in that Eunuch of Candace, Queen of Ethiopia, to whom Philip was sent by the Spirit to wash him of his leprosy of soul.

Thus then did our Lord at Nazareth act Himself as His Apostles afterwards in Him and by His commands ; first of all going to the Synagogue of the Jews, and then saying, "since ye deem yourselves unworthy of eternal life, Lo, we turn to the Gentiles." And the result is the same as in so many other cases. "*And they were all filled with wrath in the synagogue.*" Though He had spoken with exceeding graciousness of the year of release, which would embrace them all "in spirit and in truth," yet they reward Him hatred for His good will ; they requite His

offer of life with attempt to kill ; and fulfil the Psalmist's words, " I labour for peace, but when I speak unto them thereof, they make them ready to battle." For the evil one, who cannot overcome Christ with temptation, is now bent on overwhelming Him with persecution ; and his agency here is distinctly marked, by envy and attempt to murder : envy of the Gentiles is the exciting cause ; as his envy of our first parents in Paradise. And this envy instigating to murder is evidently of him who instigated Cain to kill his brother. "*And they rose up, and thrust Him out of the city ;*" as in the parable of the vineyard, they "*cast Him out of the vineyard, and slew Him ;*" they cast Him forth as an alien ; and were not content with this, but pursued Him still ; doing in type, as it were, in will, though not in effect, what Jerusalem did afterwards ; both are alike, as at the instigation of the same spirit. Thus as Miriam, for reproaching Moses with his Ethiopian wife, was herself made leprous ; the leprosy of the Gentiles cleaves to this His native city. "*And they led Him unto the brow of the hill on which their city was built, to cast Him down headlong.*" Nazareth is indeed described by modern travellers as embosomed in a valley, but perhaps this is best understood by Maundrell's account, who speaks of arriving at it from the plain of Esdraelon by a very steep and rocky ascent ; and adds, that it is " situate in a kind of round concave valley, on the top of an high hill." He speaks of going to " the Mount of Precipitation," as it is now called, by " crossing the valley in which Nazareth stands ;" and describes the spot as " a stone standing on the brink of a precipice," " in a narrow cliff between the rocks," and situate " about half a league from Nazareth southward."

"But He passing through the midst of them went His way." Thus had they the guilt of His death, but not the power; for this was reserved for the whole nation collectively; and for Judas himself, who said at last, "This is He, hold Him fast." Something, not unlike this escape, is mentioned on one occasion at Jerusalem, that "they took up stones to cast at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by." And it seems in some sense typical of His death, when they thought to have killed Him, but He delivered Himself from their hands, like the scape-goat into the wilderness, when devoted to death. And thus, as to the Jews who sought for a sign, He gave the sign of His Resurrection, that manifestation of His Godhead which they brought about by their wickedness: so here also to these Nazarenes, who in unbelief sought a sign, He gave them a proof of His Divinity by escaping from their fury: leaving their hands powerless, but full of guilt. He shows Himself Man by submitting to be dragged by them; He proves Himself God by escaping from them: setting forth also that mystery of which He spake at His Passion, that of His own free will He laid down His life: "No man taketh it from Me:" "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." And, therefore, "no man laid hands on Him, for His hour was not yet come⁵." "He passed through the midst of them," says St. Ambrose, "the mind of His enraged enemies being suddenly changed, or overwhelmed with astonishment. He was still wishing to heal the Jews, rather than destroy; that by this ineffectual result of their fury, they might cease to wish what they could not accomplish⁶."

Thus, in Judea and at Nazareth, they received Him

⁵ John x. 18; viii. 20.

⁶ In Luc. iv. 56.

not: faith must be found, in order that He may take up His footing and abode in this the manifestation of Himself; and although Capernaum was no better than these, yet it may be peradventure there were there if not five righteous persons, yet some who received Him;—that He had in the house of Peter “a place where to lay His head;” that there He Who saith, “I stand at the door and knock,” found one that heard His voice and opened the door, so that He could enter in; and that thus at Capernaum He found an anchor in the breast of His disciples amid the storms that surrounded Him. For as no evil can be done among men unless men afford an opening and access to the author of evil; so the Saviour of mankind must find a heart in men ready to receive Him, and opening for Him a lodging-place by faith, in order that He may work miracles.

SECTION VIII

THE CALL OF THE FOUR DISCIPLES

“And He came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee” (Luke). In the late occurrence at Nazareth, St. Luke has given us a full explanation of the circumstances that led Christ to leave His maternal village; whereas St. Matthew makes no allusion to it, but merely states on His arrival in Galilee, *“And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim.”* But St. Matthew’s account wonderfully harmonizes with what we have just read in St. Luke, where our Lord, on being rejected at Nazareth, spoke of His preaching to the

Gentiles; for St. Matthew proceeds to mention this His coming to Capernaum, as the fulfilment of prophecy respecting the calling of the Gentiles. And indeed Origen considers Nazareth a type of Judea, and Capernaum of the Gentile world. *"That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the Prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw a great Light: and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up"* (Matt.). Perhaps it may signify, not Zabulon and Nephthalim only by the sea, but even the Galilee of the nations also "beyond Jordan," have seen the Light. The country "beyond Jordan" is again mentioned by St. Matthew when he specifies Decapolis. The prophecy is, as usual, bound up in other minor fulfilments. For there was no more remarkable type of our deliverance from sin and the power of the grave, than the recovery and restoration of the Jews from their heavy captivity. And the Prophets that arose, like lights in that gloom, broke out into words of prophetic consolation and rejoicing, far beyond any thing that that temporal restitution alone could account for; or any deliverance at the time; such as that of the Angel who smote the army of Sennacherib, to which this expression is supposed to allude. Such are the figures of the dry bones being again clothed with second life; of light springing up in the darkness, and gladness in the desolation. St. Matthew had before alluded to this, when he spoke of Rachel weeping for her children, and being comforted of God, as Jeremiah had described⁷. And now Isaiah, speaking of the afflictions which were so sorely felt in those parts, where the Chaldeans first

⁷ Jer. xxxi. 16.

carried away the captive Israelites, consoles them with mentioning that the preludes of the salvation of Israel shall arise from the same quarter ; so that those who first suffered in that calamity were the first to be cheered by the Sun of Righteousness ; that, as St. Jerome says, "the preaching of the Redeemer should first arise, where the captivity of Israel from the Assyrians had first taken place⁸."

The same writer, on the passage in Isaiah, supposes this difference to exist between death and "the shadow of death;" that death is spoken of those who go to their graves in sin ; but the shadow of death, of those who live in sin, and are not yet departed from the world ; and therefore, if they will, may repent. This shadow indeed of that intolerable second death, is no other than that darkness here connected with it. St. Chrysostom well observes that the expression "Light is sprung up," indicates that this Light was not sought for and found by them, but that God showed Himself to them from above. And the word "*sat*" in darkness, he explains to signify the hopelessness of their condition, "as persons knowing not where to put a step forward, so they sat, overtaken by the darkness⁹." Before this their "feet stumbled on the dark mountains," but now they had sat down in despair in the valley of the shadow of death ; when the "Light sprung up," the Great Light, the True Light, the Light that lighteth every man, the Light especially of the Gentiles, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

And now commences the general account of our Lord's public ministry ; but St. Matthew and St. Mark here introduce it with no reference to the incidents just mentioned by St. Luke, or to the previous circumstances in

⁸ Com. in Matt. ad loc.

⁹ Hom. xiv. 1. Ox. Tr.

St. John ; but merely of our Lord's thus preaching after John was cast into prison. "*From that time began Jesus to preach, and say*" (Matt.) : or that He came into Galilee, "*preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, the time is fulfilled, and*" (Mark) "*the kingdom of Heaven is at hand, Repent ye*" (Matt. Mark), "*and believe in the Gospel*" (Mark). Very striking and awful are these frequent allusions to times and seasons in the Gospels, "My time is not yet come," and "the time is fulfilled," "now is the accepted time." For thus to the Church at large, to every Church, and to every individual, there is a time,—the appointed day,—after which "the door is shut," the things belonging to their peace are hidden : "the night cometh." It is remarkable that St. Matthew here describes our Lord as using precisely the same words which he had attributed to St. John the Baptist, "repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." In like manner as the expressions of Christ are so frequently taken from the Law, inasmuch as it is the same Spirit speaking by both ; but being full of gracious approaches, He says nothing of the axe at the root, or the fire unquenchable. Thus in type, John the Baptist is Elijah : yet the same figure of Elijah seems often to represent our Lord likewise ; so that the same words are found used by them both ; in like manner as the type also passes from the one to the other.

We now come to an incident of great doubt and difficulty in a Harmony of the Gospels, respecting the call of the four disciples, whether the circumstance as recorded by St. Matthew and St. Mark is the same as that mentioned by St. Luke a little later, with a considerable variety of detail. The reasons for supposing them the same are, that in both cases it seems to be the call of these

four disciples, so far as this, that they both terminate with the declaration that "they left all and followed Him," which might be supposed to be but once for all. The situation is the same, by the Lake; their occupation similar, in their being engaged as fishermen. Add to which it may be said, that the account in the two former Evangelists being more concise and general, and that of St. Luke differing by relation of circumstances, may be shown by other instances not to be an unusual case. That although St. Matthew and St. Mark say nothing of St. Peter and St. Andrew being "in their boat," yet that the expression of their "casting their nets into the sea" would seem to indicate it; and that when they proceed to speak of St. James and St. John, St. Mark adds, "who also were in their boat," as if signifying that the two just mentioned had been in their boat. Add to which, that in both narratives they are in two separate boats, a little removed from each other; and that as the two latter are in St. Matthew and St. Mark "mending their nets," it might be supposed that these were the very nets which had just been broken by the incident recorded in St. Luke. Moreover, it might be said, that as these four disciples were now in daily familiar intercourse with our Lord, it were natural to expect that a sudden call, to forsake all and become His disciples, should be accompanied with some remarkable sign, such as St. Luke records.

On the other hand, the discrepancies in the two accounts, which render it more probable that they were different occasions, are the following:—That the place it occupies in St. Luke is apparently later, and one would suppose from the circumstances after the Sermon on the Mount; that the whole descriptiveness and picture first presented

to the mind by the two accounts is quite different : in the first accounts our Lord is "walking by the sea of Galilee," apparently alone : and in a similar circumstantial manner He is described as "proceeding a little further from thence," when He calls the other two ; whereas in St. Luke the boat of the sons of Zebedee seems quite contiguous to that of their partners. At this period nothing has been said of multitudes congregated around Him, but that He taught in their synagogues on the Sabbaths. But in St. Luke He "sat in the boat," being pressed by the multitudes that thronged Him in His teaching. In the former narrative He sees Peter and Andrew "casting their nets into the sea ;" in the latter they are not fishing, but are upon the shore, "washing their nets." Add to this, that the narrative in St. Luke is the detailed account of a miracle ; that in the other two is of the call of the disciples. In these two there is no allusion to the miracle ; in St. Luke, no mention of the call of the disciples : their own act only is recorded, that "leaving all they followed Him." But an argument which appears of very great weight is the strict concurrence of St. Mark with St. Matthew, which seems to indicate that the account is of itself most exact and entire ; for St. Mark takes not a word from St. Luke, as he does when he is recording the same circumstance.

It might indeed be said, on the other side, that His "walking by the sea," in the two former Evangelists, was no contradiction to His teaching the people, as in St. Luke, but was a part of the same, as in His "walking" and "teaching" in the Temple : that the expression of their "casting their nets into the sea" might be a general term for their occupation, and include that "casting their net into the sea," at Jesus's command, which St. Luke

describes : that it would not be difficult so to accommodate and harmonize the two accounts as to form from the two one consistent and descriptive narrative of our Lord "walking by the sea," and teaching ; seeing and entering into a boat of persons well known to Him ; their casting their nets into the sea at His command ; their beckoning to their partners ; who were afterwards mending their nets on the shore, being thus broken by the miraculous draught ; and Christ's then walking along the shore, and calling them to follow Him.

It is easy thus to fill up an imaginary picture, and so to form a description from different intimations ; but such cannot be depended on as facts. Moreover, with regard to some similarity in the circumstances, it must be observed, that while they were yet occupied as fishermen on the lake, and our Lord was at Capernaum, numberless incidents might have occurred with great sameness of description during their daily interviews with Christ : the "casting their nets into the sea," "mending their nets" on the shore, "washing their nets," the two boats a short distance from each other, are circumstances which might have been found occurring daily. With regard to both incidents indicating something like distinct calls of our Lord, for on both they are said to have left all, it may be observed that, in like manner as Scriptural prophecies are fulfilled again and again with more or less completeness, so is it with religious conversions and calls ; they are so much a matter of progressive change, that they are often spoken of more than once as taking place for the first time. Thus in this case we have these disciples already attached to our Lord in the narrative of St. John, going about with Him, designated His disciples and baptizing. And it is natural to suppose that notwithstanding this more formal summons,

detailed in St. Matthew and St. Mark, and their having instantly obeyed the call, yet that they do not consider it to require an absolute renunciation of all worldly means of support, for even after the Resurrection we find them engaged in this their calling. Add to which, that when, long after they are made Apostles, it is then said, "He appointed twelve that they might be with Him;" which expression seems to indicate that even up to that time their attendance on Him and His ministry had not been so entire as subsequent to that Ordination. And it was long after that when St. Peter made the declaration, "We have left all." That entire dependence on His Providence, and abandonment of "scrip and purse" and temporal means, which He afterwards taught them during His Presence with them, was too high a lesson for them to learn at once. And as He taught as often by miracle as by word of mouth, it is easy to imagine that after this call the incident occurred which St. Luke mentions, so full of instruction; by which St. Peter was so deeply affected, and they were all taught that they might follow Him with a more entire renunciation than they had before thought necessary. Thus are they led on by little and little, as Abraham was called from Ur of the Chaldees, but rested at Haran till again called: thus Elijah calls Elisha, and afterwards works miracles before him; the Israelites are called out of Egypt, and afterwards the Red Sea opens a way. Moreover, if the circumstances are considered distinct, then we have in St. Luke the declaration to Peter alone, "thou shalt catch men;" in the others it is in the plural, "ye shall be fishers of men:" in like manner as the promise of the Keys is at one time made to St. Peter, at another to the Twelve: thus setting forth one in twelve and one in four; for all things are One, unity reigns in all perfection.

Bishop Taylor, in his *Life of Christ*, introduces the two incidents as thus distinct. St. Augustin likewise seems to think they may be two different circumstances¹⁰, but supposes that in St. Luke to precede the other, as a miracle preparatory to their full calling, which he does not consider that occasion of itself to be. This distinction he makes between the two is the more remarkable, as he considers the occurrences at Nazareth, lately mentioned by St. Luke, to be without doubt the same as St. Matthew and St. Mark record in a more general and concise manner. Without forming any decided opinion on the subject, while the case appears so doubtful, it appears the safer course to arrange them as separate incidents.

"And Jesus" (Matt.) "walking by the sea of Galilee, saw" (Matt. Mark) "two brethren" (Matt.), "Simon" (Matt. Mark), "who is called Peter" (Matt.), "and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea ; for they were fishers" (Matt. Mark) ; "and He saith unto them" (Matt.), "and Jesus said unto them" (Mark), "Come ye after Me, and I will make you (to become" Mark) "fishers of men ; and they immediately left (their" Mark) "nets, and followed Him" (Matt. Mark). Already had they been with Him and witnessed His miracles, and He had "manifested forth His glory" before them : but to be called upon to give up all and attend Him as His disciples, this was a fresh and mighty privilege ; nor did they look back. It was to another occupation they were called, and yet it was in some sense but the old converted by Him Who maketh all things new, by Him Whose custom is rather to transmute and to change than to create of nothing in this His new dispensation—converting water into wine ; bread and wine into His Body and Blood ; things natural into spiritual ;

¹⁰ De Cons. Evan. lib. xi. 41.

the earthly into a Heavenly Canaan ; the body sown in dishonour into a glorious body : fishers therefore shall they yet be, but in the new kingdom, and fishers of men. Nor does He use any expression but what He had said of old by His Prophet, "Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the Lord, and they shall fish them¹." Elisha was ploughing in the field when called by Elijah to attend him, and provided his valedictory feast from the instruments of his calling, "he took a yoke of oxen and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen;" so their nets are sacrificed, and yet converted and sanctified to a new use, to be nets to catch men.

"*And when He had gone from thence*" (Matt. Mark), "*a little further*" (Mark), "*He saw other two brethren*" (Matt.), "*James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother*" (Matt. Mark), "*who also were in the ship*" (Mark), "*in the ship with Zebedee their father*" (Matt.), "*mending their nets*" (Matt. Mark). An occupation of itself denoting their great poverty, as Chrysostom observes, as if unable to procure new. "*And straightway*" (Mark). "*He called them, and they*" (Matt. Mark) "*immediately left the ship and their father*" (Matt.), "*having left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants*" (Mark), "*followed Him*" (Matt.), "*went after Him*" (Mark). Theophylact observes, that this indicates Zebedee "not to have been a believer, whereas the mother of these Apostles believed, for she followed Christ after He was dead." And yet if he was not a believer, one is surprised at the frequent occurrence of his name. But perhaps from the mention of the hired servants, these two were persons of more consideration than their partners, Andrew and Simon. It is observable that when invited to a more familiar knowledge

¹ Jer. xvi. 16.

of Christ, as St. John records, Andrew preceded as prior in domestic relation ; but now that they are called as disciples, Simon is first mentioned, and Andrew merely as his brother ; and so on similar occasions subsequently. Whereas St. James is always placed before St. John ; although the latter was so highly privileged in the more private intercourses of Divine love. In this instant surrender of themselves, they knew not as yet for what great rewards they were called, as it was afterwards told them, when St. Peter alluded to this very circumstance : " Behold we have forsaken all and followed Thee !" And he was told, " every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My Name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life." Doubtless in relinquishing these earthly ties, they had in store their peculiar and appropriate rewards even in this present time. St. Peter was the first to leave his calling and employment ; and he had the first place among " fishers of men : " St. James and St. John were the first to sacrifice domestic affection ; and St. John had the blessedness of Divine love ² ; St. James was first admitted into a Heavenly home. If St. Peter be a type of the active life, as Theophylact suggests, and St. John of the contemplative, each has his fulness and crown in these : each equally pre-eminent, but in different ways.

Nor is it possible to imagine a picture of this world's peace, such as poets would delight to describe, superior to this in which their lot was cast, on that most beautiful and wild lake under that eastern sky : when they were called upon to relinquish all for Christ's sake. The scene and occupation was such as takes strongest hold on the affec-

² See *The Passion*, p. 332.

tions ; theirs was the home by the lake ; the sea with its sights and sounds, on which they were engaged in their calling by night, and on its banks by day ; the mountainous country around, with snowy Hermon, and sunny Tabor, and the beautiful Mount Carmel in the distance ; the free and romantic nature of their employment ; the friendship of true hearts and domestic relations ; among these things they might forget the wickedness of Scribes and Pharisees ; and be withdrawn from hearing of the crimes of Herod. Their new and more arduous employment called on them to contend with these ; but in the midst of these contentions to exchange earthly for Heavenly peace. They had but little, yet that little they relinquished, which was all their living ; and received manifold more in this present time, but "with persecutions." One part of their earthly lot still continued unimpaired ; they were called two and two as there found, and two and two they were sent forth into Christ's kingdom : earthly friendship remains ; brotherly love continues ; but cemented anew in Divine charity. The foundation of their piety is filial dutifulness ; their father is with them, and relinquished for Christ's sake ; the first fulfilment of the prophetic description of the Church ; "Forget also thine own people and thy father's house." They are called, as fishermen, to be fishers of men ; they leave their earthly father for a Father in Heaven ; their earthly home for a Heavenly mansion ; their brotherhood becomes perfected and hallowed to a new brotherhood in Christ ; their friendship to a new love, as Christ hath loved us. From that hour to this they are "casting their nets into the sea," and dragging them to the celestial shore of their Father's kingdom. They are "mending their nets" by precepts of Divine charity, sewing up the rents of the Church, and

healing her divisions. And in all these things they are not alone ; for from that hour Christ is with them, never to be separated from them any more ; He will take them to be with Him, by that sea which is before the Throne.

SECTION IX

THE DEMONIAK HEALED

For the sake of the Elect all things are done ; and we read of no working of miracles till our Lord has around Him disciples ; from whose faith, as from an anchorage, He launched forth into the deep, and wrought wonders. As afterwards with the Twelve, so now does He go forth with the Four ; as even to this day with the four Evangelists. Thus the river of Paradise is parted into four heads, to water the earth. With these, says St. Hilary, He sets forth His Gospel, healing all sicknesses, “that by His works they might discern the presence of Him, of Whom they read in the books of the Prophets³.” And here it may be observed, that to the more secret manifestations of God, “three” disciples are taken : but for preaching to the world it is the mystical number “four,” as in the discourse on the Mount of Olives. Thus for the resurrection of the dry bones in Ezekiel, the breath is called “from the four winds⁴ ;” and in Zechariah, “the four spirits of the heavens go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth⁵.” Thus the Articles of Faith naturally divide into three points, speaking of the Three Persons in One God : but the Love of God in man

³ In Matt. cap. iii. 6.

⁴ Ezek. xxxvii. 9.

⁵ Zech. vi. 5.

immediately is "parted into four heads" by the four first commandments. In the seven petitions in the Lord's Prayer, the three first are for God's honour; the four that followed are for our own sakes.

And now before we come to the more general narrative which ensues in St. Matthew's Gospel, St. Mark, the Evangelist of St. Peter, together with St. Luke, affords us a narrative of the circumstances in which the Four were now the more immediate spectators and witnesses. We may naturally suppose that this summons to the four disciples took place on the Friday; for St. Mark proceeds to mention what occurred "immediately" after, on the Sabbath. "*And they went into Capernaum*" (Mark), together with Christ, on leaving their occupation on the lake; but it does not appear that they went into St. Peter's house at Capernaum till the following day. "*And immediately,*" after this their call, "*on the Sabbath day, He entered into the synagogue and taught*" (Mark). St. Mark here mentions the general effect of His teaching together with St. Luke, who, in speaking of His coming to Capernaum, adds, "*And He was teaching them in their synagogues*" (Luke). "*And they were astonished at His teaching*" (Mark, Luke); "*for His word was with authority*" (Luke). "*For He was teaching them as one that had authority, and not as the Scribes*" (Mark). That is, that there were in His teaching emanations of His Godhead; that in this His extreme humiliation He could not but speak as the Maker, and Lawgiver, and Judge of all. This is the first occasion where this Divine authority is mentioned; for at Nazareth, before His disciples are called, or His Kingdom was proclaimed by Him, it was the graciousness of His words that impressed them. As in the Psalms, "full of grace are Thy lips,

because God hath blessed Thee for ever:" but after this graciousness succeeds authority and power, "Gird Thee with Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O Thou most Mighty, according to Thy worship and renown."

"And there was in the" (their, Mark) "synagogue a man" (Mark, Luke) "with an unclean spirit" (Mark), "having a spirit of an unclean devil" (Luke). "And he cried out" (with a loud voice, Luke), "saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee, Who Thou art, The Holy One of God" (Mark, Luke). The instances of demoniacs are so full of mystery, that all we can do is to compare them, in order to ascertain whether they will yield any case of analogy. There are several points of resemblance. In this and two other occasions,—that immediately after the Transfiguration, and that among the Gadarenes,—and also in the Acts of the Apostles, it is not the man possessed, but the devil possessing him that speaks. The "crying out with a loud voice" is also a marked feature in such cases. The evil spirit speaks of "*us*" in the plural number; and so was it in the case where he answers, "my name is Legion, for we are many." Of Mary Magdalene it is said, "out of whom went seven devils." And in our Lord's parable, "there entered into him seven other spirits worse than the first." On this and the two other most memorable instances, they are seized with uncontrollable agony at His Presence, according to the expression "the devils believe and tremble;" and they consider His Coming to be their destruction: but from the expression in St. Matthew, of one whose "name is Legion," they speak of a definite time, which they apprehend had not arrived, "hast Thou come hither to torment us before the time?"

And the same may be here indicated in the expression, "what have we to do with Thee?" as if deprecating interference, wishing to be a little longer unmolested by His Divine Presence. Add to this, that they are roused to greater degrees of violence at His appearing, which may account for the violence of bad men being increased at the presence of holy persons. There is a particular account of this in the Maniac Boy, "And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit tare him, and falling on the ground he wallowed foaming."

Above all, it is remarkable that in all cases they know Him, are anxious to confess Him, and are prevented by our Lord from doing so. Whereas at the Temptation the devil seemed to be bent on ascertaining who He is, which our Lord throughout does not disclose to him; and has since, in His dealings with men, mysteriously concealed. And indeed the words of the wicked one on the present occasion, "I know Thee, Who Thou art," seem to indicate that he had lately ascertained a truth he had been desirous to know. Their knowledge of Him now appears full, they here call Him "the Holy One of God," which, as St. Athanasius observes, is very different from "a Holy One." And soon afterwards, "the Christ," and "the Son of God;" and again in another country and long after, they confess Him "the Son of God Most High." There is on every occasion this eagerness to confess Him, and the same prohibition, so that it is said more than once in general terms, "and He would not suffer the devils to speak," as says St. Mark, "because they knew Him;" and St. Luke, "and devils went forth out of many, crying and saying, Thou art the Christ, the Son of God. And He charged them, and would not suffer them to speak, because they knew Him." This is in the highest degree

wonderful and remarkable, that the devils should throughout be so desirous to publish Christ's Name and Godhead ; while He Himself is desirous to conceal it, and imposes on them a constrained silence. It seems natural to suppose, that our Lord's reason for this earnest prohibition was the same for which He so solemnly charged His Apostles not to divulge His Godhead and the manifestations of it : indeed on one occasion, St. Matthew records our Lord's charge to the people not to make Him known, in the very same words that St. Mark at the same time records the same charge made to the evil spirits⁶. It may be that the devils knew that the manifestation of God must be the destruction of the wicked men, whom they knew to be around, in like manner as it was tormenting to themselves ; and that for this reason they wished to divulge that knowledge, and our Lord to withhold it. Nor would this explanation be opposed to, but rather would include the opinion of St. Chrysostom, and others of high authority, that our Lord would not have the wicked, whether devils or men, bear testimony to His truth. According to the expression, "Unto the ungodly," said God, "why dost thou preach My laws, and takest My covenant in thy mouth?" But it seems uncertain whether this their confession was voluntary, or forced from them against their will, at the Presence of Him Whom every tongue shall confess. Certainly their cries are of terror and earnest deprecation, especially in the case among the Gadarenes. And Tertullian's description of them in his own day is this, "seized by the thought and lively image of that fire, they even come forth from the bodies of men at our command, unwilling, and grieved, and ashamed⁷." Their power of discerning

⁶ Matt. xii. 16. Mark iii. 12.

⁷ Apol. i. 23. Ox. Trans.

the Christ some have supposed to be from the remains of their better nature ; St. Augustin says, " that they know Him not in that He is Life Eternal, but from some effects of His power which might be more evident to the Angelic senses even of bad spirits than to men." Tertullian supposes them to catch intimations from the Prophets. Their indications of fear that He had come to destroy them, Theophylact and some others interpret of His driving them from the souls of men, by the establishment of His Kingdom upon earth. But the expression "destroy us," is on another occasion "torment us;" and the dreadful apprehension is mysteriously expressed in St. Luke, that "He would not command them to go into the deep⁸." By their speaking of His having come to torment them "before the time," it may be that they made the same mistake as the Jews, thinking only of His coming as the triumphant Messiah, when He shall send forth judgment unto victory, and confounding it with this His coming in humiliation and in suffering. Or it may be that even from this time, before the Great day as they apprehended, this their dreaded torment and destruction had commenced ; for in this His Kingdom already it is said, that all enemies are put under His feet. He says Himself, with reference to His disciples casting out devils, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from Heaven;" and gives them "power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and on all the power of the enemy." And it is remarkable that in St. Mark, the earnest request of the devils named "Legion," is that He would not "send them out of the country⁹;" as if their retiring before the power given to Christians might itself intimate torment: as indeed the forcible exorcisms seemed to indicate. But this their

⁸ Luke viii. 28. 31.

⁹ Mark v. 10.

evident knowledge of Him as the Son of God gives rise to the question, how it is, as the Apostle says, "that none of the princes of this world knew, for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory¹⁰." But this is explained by their not knowing their condemnation thereby; what they did not know, according to the Apostle, was "the hidden wisdom of God" in that "mystery."

"*And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him*" (Mark, Luke). The expression "Hold thy peace," seems to explain the word "rebuked," for this word is thus used on other occasions, that "rebuking them He would not suffer them to speak, because they knew Him." "*And the unclean spirit, having torn him, and cried with a loud voice*" (Mark),—this supernatural cry St. Luke had before noticed, and it seems, as mentioned elsewhere, to take place both on seeing Christ and also on quitting his victim. And St. Luke's words fill up the fearful description: "*And the devil, having thrown him in the midst*" (Luke), "*came out of him*" (Mark, Luke), "*and hurt him not*" (Luke). Notwithstanding all his efforts of great fierceness in being obliged to quit his hold, yet the man is preserved unharmed in Christ's keeping: "the souls of the righteous are in the hand of the Lord, and no torment shall touch them;" however great their sufferings may be, yet not a hair of their head shall perish. "Not a bone" of them "shall be broken;" they are in His custody, and no one shall pluck them out of His hand. As the mother-in-law of Peter, on being healed of the fever, has no languor remaining, which ensues in a natural recovery, but immediately "rose and ministered;" as Jairus's daughter on being raised from the dead

¹⁰ 1 Cor. ii. 8.

"walked about," and "He commanded them to give her to eat;" as the paralytic is not only restored, but immediately able to carry his bed; as on His appeasing the storm there is immediately a great calm, and no swell of the sea remaining; so at His word, notwithstanding all the violence of the devil, the man is left unharmed. And all this indicating, no doubt, that however Satan may have prevailed, there is in Christ perfect restoration for the penitent. One point, indeed, of analogy in all these cases is the impotency of evil spirits when they come before Christ; and that, designing evil, they work for good: as when they wished to enter into the herd of swine, the mystery of their power on the unclean is taught thereby; their violence, as on the maniac boy, magnifies Christ's power over them; their forced cries of confession show Him to be their enemy, and that by the finger of God He casts them out; the miracles wrought on them work for good. Thus of wicked spirits, as of bad men, is it true, not only that "the fierceness of them shalt thou refrain," but also their "fierceness shall turn to Thy praise."

"*And they were all amazed*" (Mark, Luke), "*inso-much that they questioned*" (Mark), "*and spake*" (Luke), "*among themselves, saying*" (Mark, Luke), "*What is this? what new doctrine is this?*" (Mark) and "*what a word is this?*" (Luke). "*For with authority (and power*" Luke) "*He commandeth even the unclean spirits*" (Mark, Luke), "*and they obey Him*" (Mark), "*and they come out*" (Luke). This first miracle in the synagogue, on our Lord's taking upon Him His kingdom, was in the highest degree expressive, as intimating this His coming to the Jews in His kingdom. And as His miracles and His parables, His works and His words, mutually explain each other, the meaning of this miracle cannot be more

strongly set forth than by His own description, "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace ; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils." And again, "If I by the Finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you." Such was the opening of that ministry, which, as described by St. Peter, consisted in His "going about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil."

The difficulty suggested with respect to these instances is, that cases of lunacy do not now present those sensible indications of possession, which they seem to have done at our Lord's appearing. But, in the first place, we find from Revelation that evil spirits have some connexion even with bodily infirmities, beyond what we should have otherwise known ; as in the woman "whom Satan hath bound these eighteen years : " and these instances of possession appear to be more or less approaching to such cases of mere bodily infirmity. In one case it is "a deaf and dumb spirit" that rends the child, and shows violence and maltreatment ; in another it is "a dumb and blind spirit," using no violence, and apparently not different from such bodily privations. But with respect to these the sensible effects of evil spirits at our Lord's coming, it may be observed, that as wickedness was then at its height, so the bodily possession of devils may have been permitted to show itself to a greater degree of malignity, and with more palpable indications of itself than is usual. For the casting out of devils was at this time commonly attempted by the Jews, and effected long after by Christians, as we find mentioned in Tertullian and others. Add to which, that great powers were evidently permitted the evil spirits in the

oracles and prophecies of the heathen world. And those possessions of the heathen in their divinations are evidently of the same kind as these, as it appears by that damsel at Philippi, who followed St. Paul, having the spirit of Python. It is supposed that even now, among idolatrous nations, the devils are allowed to show sensible indications of their agency, such as are not known among us. But there can be no doubt that even among Christians also, where witchcraft has prevailed, an opening is given to the more sensible interference of evil spirits ; as in the case of the witch of Endor of old. Add to which, that some bodily diseases even now can be explained on no other hypothesis ; and their secret malignant influence in urging men on to things worse than human nature, is not only palpably evident in individuals, but also in whole nations among Christians. This we know by experience, and our Lord sanctions the inference, as His parable of the "unclean spirit" obviously applies both to a nation and likewise to an individual. Nor is there any confusion of thought in speaking of this their moral and spiritual influence in connexion with sensible bodily possession : for in that parable where our Lord is speaking of a habit of wickedness, He introduces it in connexion with His casting out devils, and speaks of it in the very same terms as bodily possession, of "an unclean spirit" going out of a man. That a whole nation may be possessed is moreover evident, in what is said of Egypt, that "He sent evil angels among them." With regard to these cases having increased in violence at our Lord's appearing, it may have been so in the world at large, that the symptoms were most violent when the remedy was most near ; as even in these particular cases the fierceness was most manifested on Christ expelling them. Thus Pharaoh pursues with the greater

violence when he is on the point of being overthrown in the Red Sea ; and in like manner the conversions and repentances of individuals are followed by stronger sufferings and temptations of the evil one ; so that it has almost become a proverb, " My son, if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation." Nor is it any thing beyond what one would expect, that these manifestations from the unseen world for good should be accompanied with more palpable indications of the evil one also. The same reason that allowed the peculiar disease of leprosy, and marked it so strongly by the Law, may have suffered these cases also for the manifestation of God's power, and for the sake of teaching His people. Thus in Egypt great power seems to have been allowed the magicians in working lying wonders, that the power of God might be magnified thereby ; and the same will be allowed to Antichrist also, when Christ shall destroy him " by the breath of His mouth." And as many things in the Gospels seem to bear by anticipation on the Day of Judgment, as manifestations of Christ, it may be the case with this also ; for then, in that Day, shall sensibly come forth the evil spirits possessing the bodies of men, and themselves to be judged, detected, as it were, by the light and power of His Presence.

" *And the fame of Him went forth*" (Mark, Luke) "*immediately*" (Mark) "*into every place of the country round about*" (Luke), "*into all the country of Galilee round about*" (Mark). The giving out of every Law is accompanied (as indeed St. Chrysostom observes) with miracles that prove the authority of the Lawgiver : the creation of the world preceded the Law given to Adam ; the flood preceded the covenant made with Noah ; a miraculous vision is a sign of the covenant made with

Abraham ; the mighty works in Egypt accompany the appointment of the Passover ; and the miracles in the wilderness the giving out of the Law on Mount Sinai ; the miracles of Elijah the restoration of that Law ; the miraculous gifts on the day of Pentecost the writing in the heart of the new Law. There is, moreover, in all cases a correspondence in the miraculous agency and the Law given : in the creation of all things fair and good for food the Law is, Thou shalt not eat of the fruit forbidden ; at the flood the covenant is given on the watery Bow ; the burning lamp between the sacrifice marks the good land to be given to faith ; the ten plagues on wicked Egypt precede the ten Commandments, each of which disobeyed is a plague to the heart ; and the miracles in the wilderness typify the spiritual blessings found in keeping the ten Commandments, purchased by the lamb's blood and hasty flight ; the supernatural fasting and powers shown in Elijah mark the Law restored ; the tongues of fire on the day of Pentecost are emblematic of the new law of love, and of the powers of the Spirit to cleanse, and quicken, and teach. Much more, therefore, is the manifestation of Christ in the Flesh made by commands and miracles ; and those responsive to each other ; as He Himself went about teaching and healing : and in sending forth His disciples His commission is to "preach the kingdom and to heal diseases ;" words and works both speak one and the same language. So shall it be in the consummation of all things ; the new Law shall then be ushered in by the shaking of earth and Heaven ; there shall be "thunderings and lightnings," and "the sound of the trumpet" "exceeding loud," and "the voice of words," as on Mount Sinai ; and the fulfilment of the Law shall respond to the first giving out of the same.

SECTION X

THE EVENING OF THE SABBATH

It was now this great and blessed Sabbath, in which, although it is called the rest of God, yet our Lord says, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work;" converting the Jewish rest into Christian charity; turning the water into wine, the Law into the Gospel. On the seventh day He proceeds with the renovation of His work, which He had then left off: the medicines and restorations of the Lord then commence, as St. Ambrose observes, that the new creation may begin where the old ceased¹¹. And He is showing Himself thereby the Lord of the Sabbath. "On the seventh day" God "called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud¹," and on the seventh day He teaches the Jews in the synagogue by Christ; "on the seventh day," says the Law, "purify yourselves and be clean²," and on the seventh day the unclean spirit is cast out in the synagogue at Capernaum. But there is a question in the circumstance that follows respecting the abode of St. Peter; for St. John had spoken but a year before of Bethsaida as "the city of Andrew and Peter." Some suppose that St. Peter had now removed from Bethsaida to Capernaum by his marriage; or that Bethsaida being his abode, he sojourned at Capernaum for the sake of fishing; or, of course, it is very possible that the circumstance now to be mentioned might take place at Bethsaida, which was very near Capernaum; and on one occasion, when St. Mark speaks of Bethsaida, as the place to which

¹¹ Exp. in Luc. lib. iv. 58.¹ Exod. xxiv. 16.² Numb. xxxi. 19. 24.

they intended to go, St. John substitutes Capernaum as the place to which they came³. And this would account for our Lord's not having been at this house on the preceding night, if He was then in Capernaum, and this house was in Bethsaida.

"And rising up from the synagogue," where He had sat teaching, *"He entered into the house of Simon"* (Luke). St. Matthew introduces the account at another time, on our Lord's coming to this place, connecting it with the mention of other miracles: and not being so particular with regard to time, he also mentions St. Peter under that name, before the appellation was formally given him; while the other Evangelists designate him as Simon. *"And Jesus, when He had come to the house of Peter, saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever"* (Matt.). *"And Simon's wife's mother,"* says St. Luke, *"was taken with a great fever;"* the term "great fever" is said by some to be a medical designation common among the Greek Physicians for one class of fevers. *"And they asked Him concerning her"* (Luke). St. Chrysostom mentions it as a point of humility in St. Peter, that he had not asked for our Lord's assistance previously, leaving others to be healed before he mentions his own wants. But it may have been because it was the Sabbath; for we find no such request made on the Sabbath; and now they merely "speak to Him concerning her." St. Mark's account throughout is full of the most interesting detail: for what could have been more full of deep interest to St. Peter than this perhaps first visit of our Lord to his house; and following immediately on his own first call to attend Him as His disciple? Instead, therefore, of speaking of our Lord in the singular number,

³ Mark vi. 45. John vi. 17.

as St. Matthew and St. Luke do, St. Mark speaks in the plural number, of them all who had now joined Him as His disciples, and comes to the express mention of their names ; and, by the exceedingly natural simplicity of the narrative, affords a domestic picture of the occurrence as it took place. *"And immediately, when they were gone out of the synagogue, they came unto the house of Simon and Andrew, together with James and John. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever. And immediately they tell Him of her. And He came unto her, and took hold of her hand, and raised her up"* (Mark). Yet not as if it were the force of His aiding hand in a mere natural way, for St. Matthew's account is, *"and He touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she arose"* (Matt.). Some peculiar virtue appears often connected with His Divine touch, as in healing the leper He *"touched him ;"* and the daughter of Jairus was thus raised. We read, *"He touched their eyes," "Jesus touched his ear," "He came and touched the bier,"* and the woman *"touched the hem of His garment,"* *"as many as touched Him were made whole."* And especially on the Mount of Transfiguration, St. Matthew says, *"Jesus came and touched them."* But often, as in the instance last mentioned, both His touch and His voice are combined, perhaps from some deep and mysterious connexion with His Incarnation and the raising of the dead. *"Although able,"* says St. Cyril, *"to drive away diseases by His Word, He touches them, showing them that His flesh was powerful to apply remedies, since it was the flesh of God. The Omnipotent Word of God, when He united to Himself in real assumption a living virgin temple, implanted in it a participation of His own power. May He touch us, nay, rather, may*

* See The Ministry, *Ninth Year*, p. 100,

we touch Him, that He may deliver us from the infirmities of our souls⁵." St. Luke, although he alone mentions His touch in the next case, yet here attributes it to His voice. "*And standing over her, He rebuked the fever, and it left her*" (Luke). The word "rebuked" is of itself remarkable; it was lately used on His casting out an evil spirit, and now of a fever, as if this also was connected with spiritual living agency: He rebukes the multitude and His disciples, and also evil spirits, and likewise the winds and waves: as if in all things He knew not dead laws of nature, but living beings were His agents and ministers. St. Luke also, as a Physician, most strongly describes the instantaneous fulness of the supernatural cure, "*And immediately she arose*" (Luke), "*and ministered unto them*" (Matt. Mark, Luke). "After the allaying of fever," says St. Chrysostom, "the patient needs much time before he is restored to his former health, but at this time all took place at once⁶." And St. Jerome still more strongly, that "naturally the greatest weakness is felt when fever subsides; and the evils of sickness are most felt when recovery begins: but that health which the Lord confers renders whole at once⁷." The same was noticed in the last cure.

In the mean while the report of what had occurred in the morning at the Synagogue had spread, by means of those who were there assembled, to all parts; which, in addition to the sensation already produced at Capernaum by His teaching, only waited for the termination of the Sabbath, and the setting sun, which ushered in our Lord's-day. It seems that on the preceding day they had not thought of bringing them, or thus gathering

⁵ Aur. Cat. Luc. Ox. Tr.

⁶ Hom. in Matt. xxvii. .

⁷ Com. in Matt. cap. viii.

around Him ; as if on this day had been made the great demonstration of His power, and willingness to heal. "*And the evening being come*" (Matt. Mark), "*when the sun was setting*" (Mark, Luke), "*all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto Him*" (Luke) ; "*they brought unto Him all that were afflicted*" (Mark), "*and those*" (*many*, Matt.) "*that were possessed with devils*" (Matt. Mark). And St. Mark, as if inserting it with the vivid recollection of St. Peter respecting his own house, adds, "*and the whole city was collected at the door*" (Mark). Soon after this St. Mark makes a similar insertion, when he is probably speaking of the same house, "there was no room to receive them, no not so much as about the door." "*And He healed*" (*many*, Mark, *all*, Matt.) those "*that were afflicted*" (Matt. Mark) "*with divers diseases*" (Mark). But "the beloved Physician" adds the very action which so often conferred Divine blessing, as if connecting it for ever with Sacramental ordinances of His Church by imposition of hands, and hallowing to new and spiritual powers the legal consecration of Joshua of old⁸. "*And having laid His hands on each one of them, He healed them*" (Luke). "*And He cast out*" (Matt. Mark) "*the spirits by His word*" (Matt.), "*many devils. And He suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew Him*" (Mark). And St. Luke again, more fully descriptive, "*And there came devils out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art the Christ the Son of God. And rebuking them, He would not suffer them to speak, for they knew that He was the Christ*" (Luke). And St. Matthew, as usual, pointing out to the Jews the fulfilment of prophecy, connects all this with the Atoning Sacrifice of Christ ; "*that it might*

⁸ Numb. xxvii. 18.

be fulfilled which was spoken by *Esaias the Prophet*, saying, *Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.*" St. Peter applies the same to His suffering on the Cross, "Who His own self bare our sins in His own Body on the tree⁹." "Surely," says the Prophet, "He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken." "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities¹⁰." St. Chrysostom observes that the passage is spoken not of bodily diseases, but of sins. And if so, the fulfilment which St. Matthew speaks of contains likewise another mystery; indicating the connexion between diseases and sins; and that in bearing our sins He bore our diseases also. It seems to indicate that in taking off these sufferings, our Lord was taking on Himself the penalty of sin: that the healing was even already vouchsafed by beholding mysteriously the Serpent on the pole. It is from that Tree of His suffering alone, that every variety of relief, whether bodily or mental, proceeds;—"the Tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the Tree were for the healing of the nations¹." As St. Hilary says, "forgiving the sins of all, taking away the sicknesses of all, and driving away the incentives of alluring evil pleasures, by the passion of His Body He absorbed all the infirmities of human weakness²." And all this is typically figured and set forth in the expression "when the even was come;" for "now once in the end of the world hath He appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

⁹ 1 Pet. ii. 24.

¹ Rev. xxii. 2.

¹⁰ Isa. liii. 4, 5.

² Com. in Matt. cap. vii. 7.

SECTION XI

THE MOUNT OF BEATITUDES

ST. MARK still continues a particular account of what had occurred on this visit of Christ to St. Peter's house ; it was very early on the following morning, which of course implies the Sunday, that we find our Lord had retired before day-break to pray. Although such a custom was not unusual with Him, nor even that of continuing whole nights in prayer, yet the express mention of it by the Evangelist indicates some particular occasion : and this solemn act of Christ is mentioned, in other places, as preceding some important circumstance towards His Church. Thus before He appointed the twelve Apostles, St. Luke says, "He went up into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God ; and when it was day He called unto Him His disciples." The same circumstance also, of His praying, is recorded at His Baptism, and at His Transfiguration, and at His Passion. Now from the order of the narrative, there appears reason to suppose that the Sermon on the Mount may have been delivered on this day. And what circumstance could be more suitable to the first and great Lord's-day ? the day when the Light was made, and when the true Light arose from the grave with healing in His wings ; and when the Spirit came down to write those laws in the hearts of His people ; and when St. John saw the Apocalypse : and it may be when, at the Transfiguration also, our Lord's Body was full of light. If there was such peculiar aptitude in His

teaching in the synagogue on the Jewish Sabbath ; as when He explains to them the true day of the Atonement in the synagogue at Nazareth, and casts out the unclean spirit in the synagogue at Capernaum : how suitable is it after this to "establish the Lord's House on the top of the mountains : " to send forth His light, "which goeth forth from the uttermost part of Heaven, and runneth about unto the end of it again : and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof." It was, moreover, the third day after the call of disciples : as we read in Exodus, "be ready against the third day ; for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people on Mount Sinai." Even so was it now.

There is something, indeed, in this narrative not unlike that of the ordination of the Apostles. On that occasion Christ performs a miracle on the Sabbath in the synagogue ; there is then mention of the people that flocked around Him from all parts, and of His retiring from them, and of His going up to "the mountain," and continuing the night in prayer, and on the next morning the appointment of the Apostles. In both cases the expression of His going up into "the mountain," seems to indicate the same mountain, or one known and familiar ; in both cases the disciples first came to Him, and then the multitude : in both our Lord goes afterwards to Capernaum, as if contiguous to "the mountain." It may indeed appear, in the latter case, that there is too great an interval, which must probably have taken place between the miracle in the synagogue and the call of the Twelve, according to St. Mark's account, for it to have occurred on the following day. And here also it is supposed that a considerable circuit of Galilee intervened between the circumstances on that Sabbath and the Sermon on the Mount ; but this is

not by any means clear: the mere general terms used at this time by St. Matthew are not sufficient to establish this, while the other accounts indicate a continuous narrative.

"And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. And Simon," for it was his house, *"and they that were with Him,"* the three disciples before mentioned, *"followed after Him. And when they had found Him, they say unto Him, all" men "seek for Thee" (Mark).* For it would appear from the more general account in St. Luke, that a vast multitude of people had been already seeking for Him at the house, and had now followed Peter and the rest in their search; and St. Peter speaks for the multitude as well as for themselves. *"And when it was day, He went out, and departed into a desert place; and the people sought Him, and came unto Him; and constrained Him that He would not depart from them. And He said unto them, I must preach the Kingdom of God to other cities also, for therefore am I sent" (Luke).* But it does not seem on this occasion to imply any great distance, but the villages contiguous, as St. Mark intimates. *"And He saith unto them, Let us go into the towns round about, that I may preach there also; for therefore am I come forth" (Mark).* "Have come forth," may be like the expression in St. Luke, "am I sent," have "I come forth" from God: or it may be said of this immediate occasion, "for this is the cause of My coming forth from Capernaum."

On this day, therefore, upon "seeing the multitudes," we may suppose that our Lord delivers His Sermon on the Mount, for "the Mount of Beatitudes" is well known to be near Capernaum. St. Mark makes no allusion at all

to that discourse, but merely, after the details just mentioned, seems to take up the general expressions of St. Luke and St. Matthew respecting our Lord's ministry at this period. "*And He was preaching in their synagogues through the whole of Galilee, and casting out devils*" (Mark). "*And He was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee*" (Luke). But this does not indicate that our Lord did at this time confine His teaching to the synagogues, for St. Luke proceeds to speak of "the people pressing on Him to hear the word of God," by the lake. And St. Matthew, who has not yet mentioned any of the circumstances lately recorded, speaks in general terms of this period, evidently without adhering to the order of time. "*And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing all*" manner of "*diseases, and all*" manner of "*infirmity among the people*" (Matt.). And speaking of Galilee, St. Matthew proceeds to mention, that the sensation now occasioned, during the first year of our Lord's ministry, was by no means confined to Galilee; but as He had mentioned the prophecy on His first coming to Galilee, he now mentions these fulfilments. "*And the report of Him went forth into the whole of Syria; and they brought unto Him all that were afflicted,*" and "*smitten with divers diseases and torments, and those that were possessed with devils, and lunatics*"—those suffering from nervous disorders supposed to be affected by the moon—"and paralytic. And He healed them. And there followed Him great multitudes from Galilee, and Decapolis, and Jerusalem, and Judea, and beyond Jordan" (Matt.). Decapolis was on the eastern side of the lake; but as the lake was but from six to nine miles across, this was no great distance.

"And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain, and when He had sat down His disciples came unto Him." There seems no reason for supposing this to be Mount Tabor, for the place is well known as a mount about ten miles distant from it, and thus described by Maundrell from Tabor: "A few points towards the north appears that which they call the Mount of the Beatitudes, a small rising from which our blessed Saviour delivered His Sermon. Not far from this little hill is the city Japhet, supposed to be the ancient Bethulia. It stands upon a very eminent and conspicuous mountain, and is seen far and near." Mr. Maundrell supposes that Christ alludes to this city in speaking of "the city set on an hill." The spot, indeed, seems most remarkable, from the striking beauty of the objects around, and the sacred associations with which they are connected; the lake below, with the long extended plains of Galilee, and of Esdraelon, "the valley of Jezreel;" the hills of Nazareth to the north, with the magnificent Mount Lebanon, crowned with snow, in the back-ground; Mount Carmel to the south-west; and Mount Hermon towards the east. But more fair that spiritual world now opening to the eye of faith: for what was that sunny landscape to that light which maketh all things new; the Sun of Righteousness now arising in these beatitudes with healing in His wings; His righteousness standing therein like the strong mountains; His judgments like the great deep; that city of God of which glorious things are spoken; the house of the Lord upon the top of the mountains, into which all nations shall flow? More than the dews of Hermon was the doctrine of Divine love flowing down with silver drops to the skirts of His clothing, on the disciples around Him; and fairer than that lake, now shining in the eastern sun, were those

waters that were going forth for the healing of the nations.

But there now occurs what is considered a point of great doubt, which may materially affect both the place and the time of that Divine discourse: whether it is the same as St. Luke's Sermon on the Plain. And first may be stated some reasons for considering it the same. The description of the place is not decisively against it. To those who lived by the lake the high ground might be considered as "the mountain," while that table-land might be spoken of as "the plain" by those who lived in the higher district. But the plain of Esdraelon itself is familiarly known as "the Plain of Tabor," or "the Great Plain," although there are hills rising in it, and many lesser eminences seen from Mount Tabor. And moreover, it is to be observed, that St. Luke does not state that Sermon to have taken place on the plain; but he is speaking of the plain with a more immediate reference to the healing of diseases, which he proceeds to mention. And indeed the very expression "stood" seems to indicate this; for standing is not the posture of teaching. But it might be thus explained, that "He stood in the plain," as described in St. Luke, when the sick were brought to Him; and that then, "seeing the multitudes," as in St. Matthew, "He went up into the mountain; and when He had sat down His disciples came to Him." Thus St. Augustin says, of His going up into the mountain, "He may be thought to have sought to shun the thickest crowd, and to have ascended the mountain, that He might speak to His disciples alone³." To all this it might be added, that St. Matthew introduces circumstances without reference to time or place from an apparent association of ideas;

³ De Consen. Ev. xii. 19. 9.

so much so, that the great similarity in the events preceding it, as before pointed out, might account for his here introducing the Sermon afterwards introduced by St. Luke. But these arguments are merely corroborative, in case that the similarity in the two discourses be such as to prove identity. The points of resemblance consist in the numerous similar expressions throughout the two ; in the whole order and outline of the two discourses ; both commencing with beatitudes, both terminating with the same parables of the houses built, the one on the sand, and the other on the rock : the evident omission in St. Luke of circumstances not so much in character with the peculiar tenor of his own Gospel ; St. Matthew's known custom of combining in his narrative different miracles, or parables, or discourses, so as to render it probable he may here introduce points mentioned at other times, and not delivered continuously in this discourse. All these things seem to indicate that they may be different accounts of the same Sermon.

On the other hand, it may be observed that there are many circumstances in the Gospels very similar, though clearly distinct and different ; such are the driving of the buyers and sellers out of the Temple on two occasions ; the anointing of our Lord's feet on two occasions ; the two miracles of the loaves and fishes, both mentioned by St. Matthew ; the coming to Nazareth on two occasions, and repeating the same proverb there ; the two miraculous draughts of fishes on the lake, both under many similar circumstances—the same lake, the same boat, the same command, both after toiling all night ; the parable of the supper in St. Matthew and that in St. Luke ; the parable of the talents in St. Matthew, and that of the pounds in St. Luke, with the same answer of the unprofitable ser-

vant in both ; the two parables, each of which introduces two debtors. Such, also, are the same expressions made use of by our Lord on different occasions, as that of plucking out the right eye, and cutting off the right hand, which occur twice in St. Matthew's Gospel. So also "the first shall be last, and the last first ;" "I will have mercy and not sacrifice ;" "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted," repeated with great variety as many as six or seven different times ; and especially the words, "he that hath ears to hear, let him hear," repeated fourteen times ; add to which the frequent foretelling of His sufferings. The points, moreover, in which these two discourses most resemble each other, are in what may be called the images or similes : the mote and beam in the eye ; the good and evil tree bringing forth good and corrupt fruit ; the house on the rock and that on the sand. But now it is the repeated use of the same figures which we find so remarkable in our Lord's teaching. The parable of the salt occurs on three occasions, and so also does that of the candle and candlestick ; twice that of entering in at the strait gate ; that of taking up the cross frequently ; twice that as we mete it shall be measured to us ; twice of the eye being the light of the body ; twice in St. Matthew's Gospel alone of faith removing mountains ; and twice in the same Gospel the sign of the Prophet Jonas. And here, although these discourses in these two Evangelists are similar, yet they are hardly in any single instance entirely the same : and to suppose them the same is to lose in both cases the entire force of our Lord's words ; and the additional light they mutually throw on each other by supposing them distinct. Thus, to take the first words of each, "blessed are the poor in spirit," is quite another thing to, "blessed are ye poor ;" but con-

sidered as distinct, they readily suggest these three truths—first, that the blessing is on the temper of mind ; secondly, that the external condition is also blessed ; and thirdly, that they are mutually connected with each other. Again, “be ye perfect, as your Father in Heaven is perfect,” is quite another thing to that of St. Luke, “be ye merciful, as your Father in Heaven is merciful ;” but the expressions taken together imply that this perfection is in mercy. One remarkable instance of this kind may be mentioned : in St. Matthew we read, “if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also ;” but in St. Luke it is, “him that taketh away thy cloke, forbid not to take thy coat also.” Although the expressions are in some degree similar, there is a difference, and the occasions referred to are quite different, and account for this difference : in St. Luke it is speaking of personal violence, when the outer garment is first taken ; in St. Matthew of suits at law, when the inner garment is first mentioned. There are several instances in the Gospels of this kind, where the same figure is used with a new application. In short, it was said that they who heard Him “hung on His gracious words ;” we cannot thus “hang on His words” if we know not what those words exactly were, but have only the vague impression of the same statements as given by two differing accounts. There is of old a deuteronomy, or twice giving out of the Law ; the tables of the old commandments are twice inscribed by the finger of God ; in the Gospel, therefore, there may be a repetition of the same laws.

SECTION XII

THE BEATITUDES

THE thunder and the earthquake of Mount Sinai and of Mount Horeb have ceased, and nothing is heard but that "still small voice" that spake to Elijah; the voice of that Prophet like unto Moses, the most meek of all men on the face of the earth. Moses and Elijah have departed, and He is there Himself alone: nay rather, they have returned to be seen with Him in the Mount, partaking of His glory, in light such as no fuller on earth could whiten them. For He is not come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets, but to fulfil. Thrice hath the law been given to us from Heaven; first on Mount Sinai, amid the thunderings and the lightning, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; all of which spoke of the Judgment to come, when the thunder shall be heard, and Christ seen like the lightning, and the Trumpet again shall sound. The second in the Sermon on the Mount, when Christ throughout speaks of the same Judgment to come, but with human voice of persuasion. And the third on the day of Pentecost, when the new covenant was fulfilled, "I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts⁴." It was that voice of God within the heart that speaks of Judgment to come. The first is the Mount of terror, the second is the Mount of blessing; and the third is the Mountain of holiness, the Mount Sion and Church of God. But these are all three the promulgation of the same Law; they are like their Divine Author, if we may with reverence say it, One in

⁴ Jer. xxxi. 31. 34. Heb. viii. 10.

Three, and Three in One. Each is the fulfilment, but each in a higher sense than the preceding, of the expression, "They shall be all taught of God."

"*And He opened His mouth, and taught them, saying*" — "He opened His mouth," seems to express a discourse more formal than usual, or it may be the Divine emphasis of His words, as signified by the expression, "the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it"⁵ — "*Blessed are the poor in spirit; for their's is the kingdom of Heaven.*" Man fell by pride, his restoration begins by humility: the temptation was "ye shall be as Gods:" since that time man makes a false estimate of himself, saying, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," and knows not that he is "wretched and poor, and blind and naked." Poverty of spirit is a right sense of our condition, and a coming to the truth. And therefore with such as these God will return to dwell, as the Evangelical Prophet, in speaking of preparing the way, says, "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, Whose Name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit⁶." This is new doctrine to the world, for it is the opposite to all heroic greatness; and new to the Jews, for it is contrary to the claims of their expected Messiah: but, as strait is the gate that leadeth unto life, none can enter in but those who are thus in spirit girded with lowliness; who get rid of the swellings of riches, pride, luxury. And this poverty of spirit is not only the door, but the key into the kingdom; for this alone revealeth mysteries⁷. Hence the Scribes and Pharisees enter not. "Sell what thou hast and give to the poor," is written over the door; and this they understood not; until on

⁵ Isa. lviii. 14.

⁶ Isa. lvii. 15.

⁷ Eccclus. iii. 19.

the day of Pentecost, they were by that Anointing taught of God, and "sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, as every man had need." As to the Rich young man, our Lord said, "sell what thou hast," before He added, "and follow Me:" as Zaccheus said, "half of my goods I give to the poor," when Salvation entered his house: as the Apostles "forsook all," and then "followed Him:" as the first disciples "sold their lands" before "they continued daily in the temple;" as the treasure is first laid up in Heaven, and then the heart follows where the treasure is; so this temper, if it be not the greatest and chief, is pre-eminently the foremost requisite. Thus did our Lord fulfil what He had said at Nazareth, that He was anointed "to preach good tidings to the poor:" and now He hastens to the next words also of that solemn proclamation; "He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted."

"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." For the Comforter shall dwell not only with the poor in spirit; but with those that endeavour to be so, those that mourn. "Who mourn," says St. Hilary, "not for the loss of kindred, for affronts or injuries, but who weep for past sins." And not for their own sins only, but for those of others. "The mourning here meant," says St. Jerome, "is not for the dead, but for the dead in sins. Thus Samuel mourned for Saul; thus the Apostle Paul for those that repented not:" and we may add, thus Christ mourned. But perhaps it is better not to confine the meaning of our Lord's words, but to say that every state of mourning is blessed in its kind, partaking of that blessedness which goeth forth from the Man of Sorrows; that "it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting;" "that the Lord

loveth whom He chasteneth ;” that “the heart of the wise is in the house of mourning ;” to have received in this life good things is spoken of as evil in itself : “in the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer,” is the legacy to the chosen ; “these are they that have come out of great tribulation,” is the description of those who are comforted in Heaven ; “as sorrowful yet always rejoicing,” of those in whom it is fulfilled on earth. Of course, according to the worthiness of their sorrows do men approach more and more unto Christ crucified and to the Comforter ; yet the invitation is to all, “Come unto Me all ye that are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.” Sense of lost good, sinfulness of the world around, absence from Heaven, rejection of bodily delights, presence of sin, even loss of friends, all these are subjects of godly sorrow unto repentance and life.

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” “The meek,” says St. Augustin, “are they who resist not wrongs, nor give way to evil ; but overcome evil with good.” But the promise is best explained by the Psalm to which it seems to allude, that “the meek shall inherit the earth, and be refreshed in the multitude of peace.” While those most opposite to the meek, the conquerors and great ones of the world, are contending for the possession of the earth, the meek have it as the gift of God, they enter in and inherit it by the possession of that peace, for which the others seek in vain. “Your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in⁸.” And this peace is a pledge of a better inheritance hereafter, in the land which God giveth. Although the good man “maketh himself a prey ;” yet giving up houses and lands, he shall have an hundred-fold in this present

⁸ Numb. xiv. 31.

time. The inheritance of the earth is especially given to men of this character: it is they who in the fifth commandment have length of days promised; for it is the foundation of that filial piety which preserves kingdoms and Churches. "Piety," in the language of the Romans, signifies filial dutifulness; the Greeks had no term to correspond with this; they had *στοργή*, and thought much of *συγγένεια*, but had no translation for the Latin "pietas." Greek States were but for a day; Rome remains. And in Holy Writ, the Rechabites, who were an instance of filial piety, although they were as strangers and sojourners dwelling in tents, yet had the promise that they "shall not want a man to stand before Me for ever⁹." This is the one point in which we are to follow our Lord's example;—"Learn of Me, for I am meek;" and therefore "the meek inherit the earth," for the inheritance of the earth is given unto Christ; and thus the meek in Him receive that inheritance; for He adds, "I will refresh you;" they are "refreshed in the multitude of peace." And as a type of this, Moses, who led the way to the earthly inheritance, was the meekest of men.

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." It is not that they who are righteous are blessed; for all Christian righteousness depends on being more and more sensible of sin; and according to this their longing painful desire to be better than they are, He Who is all righteousness doth fill them; but of this His righteousness within them they are not sensible, but, deploring their ignorance of Him, they hunger and thirst more after that righteousness: and as they hunger and thirst more, the more are they filled. By His light within them, they are more sensible of their

⁹ Jer. xxxv. 19.

own darkness ; and thus they humble themselves more and more ; and humbling themselves more, they are the more exalted. The expression "hunger and thirst" is of course replete with mysterious Sacramental meaning, applying bodily feelings for things sensible to our partaking of Him Who is the Living Bread and the Living Water, and at the same time our Righteousness. They shall be filled now sacramentally and spiritually ; but in beatific fruition hereafter ; for in that city "they shall be all righteous," "they shall be satisfied with the plenteousness of Thy house ;" "they shall hunger no more, and thirst no more." For the present it is written, "of His fulness have all we received ;" and "as the hart desireth the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after Thee, O God ;" but of that time "when I wake up after Thy likeness, I shall be satisfied with it." Thus is it fulfilled, "He hath prepared meat for them that fear Him ;" "the poor shall eat and be satisfied."

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Not of almsgiving only is this said,—though that be indeed laying up treasure in Heaven against the time of our great need,—but of all deeds of mercy. They who forgive others shall be forgiven of their Father which is in Heaven : according to the measure with which they mete it shall be measured to them again : and charity shall cover the multitude of sins. And this also is from the leaves that are put forth by the healing tree of the Cross : for they who are most sensible of their own need of mercy shall obtain it ; and they who are most sensible of their own need of mercy will most of all be merciful to others ; and they shall most of all be rewarded of Christ, Who says, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Sensuality blinds the eyes of the soul, so that they cannot see God, nor the things of God ; but purity of heart is, as St. Austin says, the cleansed eye, by which may be discerned that which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man." In His word, in His works, in His sacraments, in His providences, and in the heart itself, the pure in heart shall see Him. In the clean and pure heart His image is reflected, and He there manifests Himself ; and then shall the whole body be full of light. Therefore it is that to little children is the door of His kingdom opened, and unto babes are mysteries revealed. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." "Who shall rise up in His holy place? Even he that hath clean hands, and a pure heart." Hence all legal ablutions previous to appearing before God : "I will wash mine hands in innocency ; and so will I go to Thine altar." It is the keeping of the heart as in God's sight, which gives this faculty of discerning Him : and he that hath this hope "purifieth himself even as He is pure."

"Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God." The last-mentioned blessing was in secret, for purity of heart is in secret, and the vision of God is in secret ; and the single eye which makes the whole body full of light : but this is before men ; "they shall be called" the children of Him of whom it is said that "He maketh men to be of one mind in an house : " Whose "peace passeth all understanding ;" Who is "the God of peace ;" the song of Whose birth was "peace on earth ;" Whose dying gift was, "My peace I leave you : " Whose title is, "the Prince of peace ;" Who hath reconciled us to God, "having made peace by the blood of His

Cross ;" in order that we may be in Him restored to the image of God. The first image in which Adam was created was Holiness ; but the second image is Peace : in which "He that is perfect shall be as his Master,"—making peace.

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." Many will desire the office of peace-makers, in order that they may be God's children, but find that saying fulfilled, "I labour for peace, but when I speak unto them thereof, they make them ready to battle." And thus the Apostle St. Peter, after saying, "He that will love life, let him seek peace and ensue it," adds, "but and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye." But this blessing comes the last of the beatitudes, because we must first live godly and be "poor in spirit," and "meek," fulfilling all duties of domestic piety, and be "makers of peace ;" and then shall we be worthy of persecution. For Satan, when he cannot avail by temptation, then stirs up persecution : so that the saints, the benefactors of mankind, the lovers of peace, the lovers of God and man, are always persecuted : nor is there any eminent saint without this mark of the Cross. Strange it appears, and yet not strange, to be hated by that world which hates God, the Benefactor of us all. Moreover, the other blessings they shared while He was with them ; the last, that of persecution, when He was taken from them, and they had joy in the Holy Ghost.

Thus the preaching of Christ begins and ends with "the Kingdom of Heaven ;" which is the crown of the first and of the eighth Beatitude : such is Christ, the First and the Last, the first day and the eighth day, the true Sabbath and the true Light. The sixth Beatitude

speaks of seeing God in purity, as on the sixth day man is made in the image of God, and on the sixth is again renewed after the likeness of Him that made him. The seventh Beatitude speaks of the Sabbath of peace: the eighth, as St. Jerome observes, of "the true circumcision terminated by martyrdom."

These eight Beatitudes are the opposite to what the world supposes. Poverty of spirit is thought the last qualification for a kingdom; meekness least likely to obtain earthly inheritance; mourning most opposed to consolation, by them who say "let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." The righteousness which continues to hunger and thirst is most unlike the self-satisfaction and self-complacency of Heathen and Jewish righteousness. The pure in heart seek not pleasure as their end, but enjoy the infinite delight of seeing God. Persecution and a kingdom, suffering and reigning, were never found united before they were so found in this sermon.

Again, the blessings vouchsafed have a present fulfilment even now, in pledge of the higher accomplishment hereafter. To the poor the Gospel is preached; they flock into it, and receive even here its promises. The mourners therein are comforted. The meek inherit the riches of the kingdom here below, and continuance, and length of days. "He hath filled the hungry with good things," even here on earth. The merciful obtain mercy even now from men, who mete into their bosom full measure and flowing over. The pure in heart see God now in faith, in beatific vision hereafter. Persecution even now hath sensible joy, emanating from the very countenance of suffering, as in the blessed St. Stephen, seeing the glory that shall be revealed.

Again, it may be observed that all these graces are

bound together by a golden chain ; for poverty of spirit is the foundation of mourning ; and mourning produces meekness ; and meekness causes hunger and thirst after righteousness : and such, being sensible of their own need of mercy, will be merciful to others ; and obtaining mercy, will be "pure in heart ;" for the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, full of mercy and good fruits : and thus, being sons of God, they bear the Cross of persecution. Thus though there are eight distinct roads to the riches that are hid in Christ, "the treasures of darkness," the secrets of His kingdom ; yet they mutually imply each other : and all begin and end in Christ.

There is an intimate order and relation between these and the petitions in the Lord's prayer : the poor in spirit, to whom the kingdom of Heaven belongs, hallow the Name of their Father, the Father of Spirits in Heaven. They to whom earth is a state of mourning, pray that His kingdom may come. The meek are they who pray that God's will may be done in them and by them, whatever it be. They who hunger and thirst after righteousness are content with sustenance for the day, hungering daily for the spiritual bread of life. They who, being merciful, obtain mercy of God, alone can say, "forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive" others. Purity of heart is nothing else but watchfulness, and prayer against temptation. They who are persecuted, pray to be delivered from evil, for they cannot be harmed or hurt by persecution, but so far as evil is found in them : for "who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" And Thine is the kingdom, which Thou hast promised to bestow upon those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake ; the power to defend them, and the glory to crown them, is Thine.

Moreover, as these Beatitudes are but the crown hid in Christ, so are all these graces pre-eminently found in Him, of Whose fulness they all receive. He became poor, that by His poverty we might be made rich. He mourned, saying, "Come and see if there was ever sorrow like unto My sorrow." He said, "learn of Me, for I am meek." His meat was to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work; so as to forget bodily hunger and thirst. He was merciful beyond all, being Himself the good Samaritan. He alone was perfectly "pure in heart." He was the great Peace-maker between Heaven and earth: persecuted beyond all, in order to be so, making thereby the Cross the sceptre of His kingdom.

In like manner they might all be shown to be the works of Charity, which St. Paul describes, and the fruits of the Spirit; and the gifts and indications of His seven-fold power: for the Beatitude being the same in the first and the eighth, viz. "theirs is the kingdom of Heaven,"—it might be considered as seven-fold.

To these, as seven sentences, St. Austin¹ applies the expression of the Psalmist, "the words of the Lord are pure words; even as the silver which from the earth is tried, and purified seven times in the fire²," and shows that all the precepts in the Sermon on the Mount flow from these seven. For what is the remedy against being angry with one's brother in thought, word, or deed, but to be poor in spirit? Who submits his cheek to be stricken, and takes patiently all wrong, but the meek? Who mourns so deeply as he that is conscious how the eye of concupiscence wars against his better will? And how can those strict Evangelical precepts be kept but

¹ See Serm. in Mont. ii. 40.

² Ps. xii. 6.

by those who hunger and thirst after righteousness? Who but the merciful can love and pray for their enemies? Who but the pure in heart directs his alms, and prayers, and fastings to God in secret? Who *else* but the pure in heart can discern the narrow way that leads to God? In like manner St. Augustin speaks of the petitions of the Lord's prayer being seven-fold, and explains them as corresponding throughout with the seven-fold number of the Beatitudes.

After these general statements our Lord applies them particularly to His own disciples, and the last more especially, as peculiarly their own. "*Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in Heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.*" But St. Peter adds an encouragement far greater than this of partaking with the Prophets, "Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings." To this blessing alone sensible and present joy seems to be attached, both here and throughout the Scriptures: "rejoice," as it is in St. Luke, "and leap for joy." And it was soon fulfilled in the Apostles themselves, when, being beaten, they "rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name's sake." Indeed all persecuted Christians after the death of Christ are represented as "rejoicing in tribulation;" and St. Paul when most of all in persecution rejoiced the most, "taking pleasure in infirmities," "in reproaches, in persecutions, for Christ's sake:" and he most of all speaks of rejoicing to those who were so afflicted. To these is the crown in Heaven, and the company and example of Prophets. And the raising of this mysterious

persecution against them has the especial mark of Satan ; for it has ever cruelty and falsehood in it, and it is against holiness, for it is "for My sake."

"*Ye are the salt of the earth.*" If ye yourselves, My disciples, are wanting in these principles, what else shall preserve the world from corruption? and what else but these principles shall make men, as seasoned with salt, meet sacrifices for God, and able to endure to eternity?—"but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and trodden under foot of men." Unless good principle becomes itself corrupted, it cannot be trodden under foot, but must prevail; and such salt is that principle which preserves from corruption and to immortality. As St. Hilary says, "the Apostles were preachers of Heavenly things; and thus, as it were, salters with eternity: and with reason are they called the salt of the earth, as through the virtue of their doctrine, as it were by salt, preserving bodies for immortality³." And St. Augustin says beautifully of this precept, "Not he that suffers persecution is trodden under foot of men, but he who through fear of persecution falls away. For we can tread only on what is below us: but he is in no way below us, who, however he may suffer in body, yet has his heart fixed in Heaven⁴."

"*Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.*" This was, indeed, strange language for poor and unlettered fishermen to hear. When seasoned with the salt of these divine beatitudes they are themselves the salt of the earth, the light of the world, a city on an hill. Christ's words are full, not

³ Com. in Matt. cap. iv. 10.

⁴ Aur. Cat. See Study of the Gospels, p. 261.

only of doctrine, but also of prophecy: already do we see the Apostolic Church, the Eternal City, which hath no need of sun or moon to lighten it. This light, which now appears so dim and faint in its effects—being rejected of men—and the things of God now spoken in the ear in secret, shall come forth to all the world, and be set forth as a radiant light on that candlestick which is the Church: and “He that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks” shall be seen therein, “dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto,” “Who only hath immortality.” *“Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel.”* Nor shall this light be hidden under cares of buying and selling, as it will with those who say, “When will the Sabbath be gone, that we may set forth wheat?” *“But,”* it shall be placed *“on a candlestick,”* on the seat of the Apostolic Ministry, *“that it may give light to all that are in the house;”* i. e. to “the household of God,” which is the Church, “the whole family in Heaven and earth” named of Christ, “the household of faith.”

“So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify”—not you, for ye shall be reproached, and better is it for you it should be so; but—*“your Father which is in Heaven.”* It is not said that they may “glorify God,” but by an expression of endearing relation, “your Father in Heaven,” which runs through the whole of this sermon, being the first promulgation of the New Law, as given to the children of adoption. “He that glorieth,” says St. Paul, “let him glory in the Lord.” “Our light is to shine forth, although we conceal it,” says St. Hilary, “and to shine forth in honour of God.” And as the whole of this

⁵ Amos viii. 5.

passage has a reference to the establishing of the Church, the Light on the candlestick, the City on the hill, and the Household of faith, so does this precept also: for as Origen, in his Treatise against Celsus, and other early writers testify, the good lives of Christians did more to convert the world than miracles or preaching. It was indeed of itself most miraculous preaching.

SECTION XIII

THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS FULFILLED

"Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets." Here breaks forth, as it were, the unwilling indication of His Godhead, for He speaks as One Who had power over the Law and the Prophets of God; and His teaching had already indicated something so new and Divine growing out of the Law, and He spake with authority so different from the Scribes, and yet withal Himself of no sacerdotal tribe, that it might be supposed He came to set aside what had gone before. *"I came not to destroy, but to fulfil."* For both the moral and ceremonial Law can alone be fulfilled in that Church of things Heavenly which they foreshadowed. As He said upon the Cross, when He had received the vinegar, "It is finished;" so had He Himself fulfilled the Law and the Prophets; and since then is He in His Church and in His members fulfilling "that which was behind;" while He in them and they in Him fulfil the circumcision, and the sacrifice, and the burning of incense; while that love which runs down to the skirts of His clothing, is making even to the phylacteries and

fringes of His garment the Law to be fulfilled. "Blotting out and nailing to His Cross the handwriting of ordinances which was against us:" and as St. Augustin says, "by the sacrifice of His flesh obtaining for us this indulgence, even in this fulfilling the Law, that where through our infirmity we could not, we should be strengthened by His perfection, of Whom, as our Head, we all are members⁶." *"For verily I say unto you, Until Heaven and earth shall pass away, one jot or one point shall not pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled."* Even points that appear most minute have their fulfilment in the kingdom of Heaven upon earth; and even that fulfilment is but itself preparatory to a higher accomplishment, when the Heavens and the earth shall have passed away⁷. For the material Heavens and earth are but the shadows of those spiritual and eternal things, which the breath of God through the Law and the Prophets declares, and through them fulfils; they are but the scaffolding to that "building of God, the House not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens." For His voice, on declaring that Law, shook the earth; and His next voice, in the fulfilment of it, shall shake both earth and Heaven. "And this word, yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things that cannot be shaken may remain."

But in the Evangelical covenant, as in Paradise of old, the Tempter ever whispers, that it is not needful to keep those commandments, which it is the very object of the Gospel to enforce and to fulfil; foreseeing which, He adds, *"Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the*

⁶ Aur. Cat. Ox. Tr. ⁷ See The Holy Week, pp. 307, 308.

least in the kingdom of Heaven." that is, says St. Chrysostom, he shall not enter into it at all. St. Augustin seems to understand the expression to imply various degrees in Heaven. But as these things have some sort of fulfilment here on earth, it is certainly remarkable that those who answer most obviously to the description here given, viz. those who teach justification by faith only to the exclusion of works, have never found a place in the Church. And with regard even to the ceremonial Law, it is in the Church of Christ carried out and fulfilled spiritually, by the three orders of clergy, by the eucharistic sacrifice, and by the law of mystical interpretation; but these are not found in other societies of Christians without the Church. *"But whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of Heaven."* According to this, the genuine fulfilment of these commandments, he shall arise more and more into the understanding of all mysteries, and grow in the knowledge and love of God. *"For I say unto you, That unless your righteousness shall exceed"* that *"of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall by no means enter into the kingdom of Heaven."* "By Scribes and Pharisees here," says St. Chrysostom, "He meant not merely the lawless, but the well-doers. For were they not doing well He would not have said they have a righteousness." They were great pretenders to religion, but knew not its spiritual depth and power; and therefore that Scribe that knew love to be the fulfilling of the commandments was not far from the kingdom⁸; and to know that "the law is spiritual," is to know ourselves to be "carnal, and sold under sin," and encompassed by "the body of death;" while through faith in Christ "the righteousness

⁸ See The Holy Week, pp. 203, 204.

of the Law is fulfilled" in them that "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

And as our Lord so often takes the second Table to set forth in a more palpable manner His spiritual Law as the test, so does He here select two of the commandments from that Table, the sixth and seventh, as instances of the manner in which He will have the Law fulfilled. "*Ye have heard*" in the Decalogue, "*how it was said by*" or to "*them of old, Thou shalt do no murder ; and whosoever shall murder shall be liable to the judgment. But I*"—as He Who hath judgment committed unto Him, because He is the Son of Man, Who hath power over the Sabbath and over the Law, and for Whom the Sabbath and the Law were made :—but I "*say unto you, That every one who is angry with his brother without cause shall be liable to the judgment,*" or to the minor court of judicature, which could inflict death. As in every other point, so the term "brother" is brought forth out of the Law, but in a higher sense ; for as throughout this sermon God is spoken of as our Father," the same tender relation makes all men emphatically our brethren. And the expression "without cause" indicates that anger is not of itself sinful, for our Lord Himself was "angry ;" and St. Chrysostom holds the same doctrine as our own Bishop Butler on this subject, saying, "being angry is not a transgression, but being so unseasonably ;" and "this passion is even useful, if we know how to use it at the suitable time"¹⁰. "*And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the Council*"—or the judgment of the greater court among the Jews—"and whosoever shall say, *Thou fool, shall be liable to the fire of Hell.*" For as there are different rewards for the good, so that one is set over ten

• Hom. vii. 14. 24 ; viii. 4.

¹⁰ In Matt. Hom. xvi. 9.

and another over five cities¹, and as the Resurrection of the dead is as one star differeth from another star in glory, so likewise shall one be beaten by few and another by many stripes². And it may be that even the courts of judicature under the Law, differing in degrees of weight and dignity, have their antitypes in things Heavenly. The thoughts shall then be remembered, "whosoever is angry;" and words also, for, "of every idle word that men shall speak they shall give account thereof on the day of judgment." Oh, most wonderful and mysterious, but most awful scrutiny—the candle of the Lord—that shall come like an eye of lightning into the inner soul, and reveal all that in the darkness of this world hath been written thereon!

And all this Evangelical righteousness flows from the Sacrifice of Christ, from our being filled with that atonement, and acting up to the new relation in which we are placed thereby; without which there is no acceptable service. For it is that "Altar" of God where there is remission of sins in the Blood of Christ, to which we cannot approach without this forgiveness of each other; or we shall be as that ungracious servant in the parable, who after being freely forgiven much, rigorously exacted what little was due to him from his fellow-servant. These are all the approaches to that City, where the Lamb is the light thereof. Whenever we come to the Altar of God, such are preparatory steps below, leading to that place where the redeemed shall follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. *"If therefore thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer*

¹ Luke xix. 17. 19.

² Luke xii. 47.

thy gift." In this was the Law not abolished, but fulfilled, for this was the cleansing required by the Law, not of the hands, but of the heart—"I will wash mine hands in innocency, and so will I go to thine altar." And this strikes at once at that self-deceit of which St. John so often warns, "He that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, Whom he hath not seen?"

But as this coming to the altar of God below is but a preparation and type of the final Judgment; of this, therefore, the Lord proceeds to speak. "*Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the last farthing.*" On the similar passage in St. Luke, spoken on a different occasion, and with a different reference, Origen appeals to the Shepherd of Hermas, and states that each person has a good and evil angel constantly attending him along this his mortal journey, the latter assiduously endeavouring to wound him in his thoughts and conscience, and to draw him over to his prince, as there mentioned; for it appears in Daniel that each province is under one prince. And it is certainly remarkable how the Gospel abounds with living agents, instead of dead laws of morals and providence. Or, "the adversary," of course, might signify the person first mentioned, who "hath ought against thee;" and it is said, "agree with him," not as in St. Luke, "be delivered from him." If we might add it with reverence, Christ Himself in the Revelation says, "I have somewhat against thee," and then calls to repentance; and Ahab says to Elijah,

"Hast thou found me, O mine enemy⁴?" So that it might be allowable to consider Christ, Whom we have offended, or His Prophet, or our own conscience, His watcher within the heart, to be that adversary with whom we must be reconciled before it be for ever too late. The "officer," to whom the judge delivers may of course be the servant of the King in the marriage supper, to whom He says, "Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness."

"*Ye have heard that it was said by,*" or to, "*them of old, Thou shalt not commit adultery.*" As they are so often found together in the world, so in all laws hatred and lust, murder and adultery, are combined. "*But I say unto you, That whosoever shall look upon a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart.*" This warning again calls but to the true fulfilment of the Law; for the fear of God within the heart sets the rein on the thoughts and senses, as Job says, "I have made a covenant with mine eyes, why then should I think upon a maid⁴?" "*And if thy right eye offend thee*"—or hinder thee from thy true happiness, as Augustin explains it—"pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." The eye here spoken of seems to arise from the eye of lust before alluded to; and it is remarkable that in the other place, where this striking expression is made use of by our Lord, it takes its rise from occasions of offence there spoken of, and begins not with "the eye,"

⁴ Job xxxi. 1.

but with the hand, "if thy hand offend thee." The word "right," here attached to it, seems to indicate not only nearness, but pre-eminence in value. But this reference to the body and bodily members seems to be mysteriously connected with the resurrection of the body. St. Augustin takes the eye to signify any dear object, and "the right eye" any thing more especially so⁵. The hand or right hand he takes for a friend. And St. Hilary, "as we are all members one of another, and one body, we are admonished to cast away from us, or rather to root out our close attachments to the dearest names, if we perceive in them any thing of this kind ; lest from intimacy we come to partake in their crimes⁶."

Christ now takes a very palpable case in the Law of Moses, to show the higher and better fulfilment of it which He requires. "*It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement ;*" it had been said, not as a permission but as a restraint on the practice, that it should not be done without a deliberate and formal bond. "*But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication,*"—which would pollute himself by further intimacy, as St. Hilary says ; or a case in which it is permitted to put away, but not enjoined, as St. Augustin takes it—he "*causeth her to commit adultery ;*" or puts her in that state in which, if she acts as free and marries another, she will be an adulteress, as well as himself ; in another place it is, he "*committeth adultery against her.*" "*And whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.*" There are three occasions in which our Lord repeats this saying : another is, where it occurs in St. Luke's Gospel, as an isolated expression, when He

⁵ De Serm. Dom. in Mont. lib. i. 3.

⁶ In Matt. iv. 21.

is speaking of the Law and the Prophets not being abrogated ; and a third when, as if it was a known case in which our Lord seemed to speak differently from Moses, the Pharisees came, putting the question in order to tempt Him.

“*Again,*” to take another instance of the Christian fulfilment of the Law beyond the Jewish and Pharisaical, “*ye have heard that it was said by,*” or to, “*them of old, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but thou shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths,*” nor take His name in vain. The Law had said, “*Ye shall not swear by My Name falsely ;*” but the Christian law of perfection allows not of even any approach to this false swearing, by saying, “*Swear not at all ;*” for he who swears not at all will not swear falsely. Asseveration by oath is only on account of man’s wickedness, to prevent the outbreaking of crime, and so far as the Law had a reference to temporal government it might be needful ; but as the Law is spiritually fulfilled in the Christian kingdom, there is no occasion for oaths at all ; for if any one speaks not the truth he is unfit for the kingdom of God, and if he speaks truth there is no need of an appeal to God, Who is always alike present. Probity of life is the best guarantee, not vehemence of language ; consistent holiness and integrity is of itself a reverential appeal to God, and the best acknowledgment of His Presence. “*But I say unto you, Swear not at all.*” All those fine-drawn distinctions of the Pharisees, as of swearing not by the Temple or the Altar, but by the gold, are but parts of their own hypocrisy. “*Swear not at all ; neither by Heaven, for it is God’s throne ; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool ; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the*

city of the great King: neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black." For all these things, says Augustin, from the highest to the lowest, are created and governed by the Providence of God, from the throne of God even to the hairs of our head, whether white or black. "*But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil;*" arises from that vehemence which is not of God: from mutual distrust, which charity knows not; from changeableness and infirmity of purpose, which is not in Christ, Who is Yea and Amen. But if it be said, that St. Paul does make these asseverations, and appeals to God, as when he says "God is my witness," or, "I protest by your rejoicing," in answer to this St. Augustin observes, that we are to refrain from swearing as not desirable, excepting where it is necessary; as when one sees men slow to believe unless it be confirmed by an oath, that which it is expedient for them that they should believe; what is more than this is of evil, inasmuch as it is not desirable of itself, and if needful, it is so from man's infirmity, and therefore "cometh of evil;" or, "of the evil one." Perhaps what St. Hilary says is most to the point, "They who live in the simplicity of the faith have no need to swear; with them always what is is, what is not is not; by these means all their work and discourse is in truth^a."

"*Ye have heard that it hath been said,*" in the Levitical Law, "*an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:*" for requital and retaliation is the Law of nature, and sanctioned by the God of nature; but Christians are by Christ's death put under a new law, and born of a new

^a Com. in Matt. cap. iv. 23.

and better nature. The natural law seeks peace by retribution ; the Evangelical law by touching the heart, by setting the passions at rest, and desiring no retaliation ; and thus bestows the peace of God which the other desired in vain. And this is the new law of Christ's kingdom, in which He deals not with us after our sins, but according to His own mercy and grace. "*But I,*" the Lawgiver of the New Covenant, and Judge of all—"but I say unto you, *That ye resist not evil ;*" or, as St. Chrysostom would render it, "resist not the Evil One, for one fire is not quenched by another, but fire by water." "*But whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.*" Not literally, but after the higher and spiritual nature of Christ's laws, and in which His own example is always the best commentary on His precepts ; for though it is written of Him, "He giveth His cheek to him that smiteth Him⁹," and "I gave My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair¹," yet not according to the letter, for He expostulated, "Why smitest thou Me?" but by the sevenfold and infinite fulfilment of love in dying for him that smote Him, and in praying for him at His death, He more truly fulfilled His own precept. "For the Lord was ready," says Augustin²; "not only to be smitten on the other cheek for the salvation of men, but to be crucified with His whole Body." "That retribution which tends to correction is not here forbidden, for such is indeed a part of mercy ; nor does such intention hinder that he who seeks to correct another, is not at the same time ready himself to take more at his hands." "As the Physician of souls," says the same writer, "He teaches us to bear with the sicknesses of others : our acquiescence

⁹ Lam. iii. 30.¹ Isa. l. 6.² Sermon in Mat. i. 19.

and non-resistance being only regulated by what may be desirable for the healing of our brother's soul."

"*And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.*" "This also," says St. Augustin, "as the former, is rightly taken of preparation of the heart, not of the show of the outward action;" and "if the command be expressed in these necessary articles of life, how much more does it hold in the case of superfluities and luxuries?" But why should I mention insult and overreaching in taking your goods? not only on such occasions be gentle and mild, but even if a person unjustly puts upon you bodily toil and hardship.—"*And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile,*"—exacting it of thee as a burdensome service, here again rise superior to his unjust desire, by being ready to do and suffer even more than he wishes to inflict, and "*go with him twain.*" Thus St. Paul, when he was told he should be put in bonds, said, "I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die for the Name of the Lord Jesus;" and the Apostles, when beaten, rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for the Name of Christ, and offered themselves up to still greater persecutions.

"*Give to him that asketh thee;*" according to the mercies of God, Who has promised in Christ, "Ask; and ye shall have; knock, and it shall be opened unto you;" and "every one that asketh receiveth." "*And from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.*" Which is indeed one of the tender and charitable precepts interspersed throughout the Law; but here it is brought out into full mention, as the foundation of the New Covenant. In the intervening space between the Law and the Gospel it is also found in the beautiful advice of Tobit to his son, "Never turn thy face from any poor

man; and then the face of the Lord shall not be turned away from thee." Here, also, as in so many touching and expressive instances, God puts Himself in the place of our poor neighbour—"He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord: and look, what he layeth out it shall be paid him again."

"*Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.*" For the same law that bound together the Israel of God, set the mark of legal uncleanness and abomination upon the Heathen, marking the enemy of God for the enemy of Israel, and of the Israelite; represented by Amalek of old and Edom; and afterwards in prophecy by Judas and the Jewish nation; so that "the man after God's own heart" could so speak in the Psalms, in words of very fearful and unsparing deprecation, but in typical, mysterious allusion to the final condemnation of the wicked. "*But I say unto you,*"—according to the new law of Divine charity, by which you are received into covenant with God by Christ suffering, the just for the unjust, for the ungodly and sinners, His enemies—"but I say unto you, *Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.*" Not to hate were indeed a great matter, but this new commandment, "I say unto you, Love your enemies," is far more excellent and Divine; and yet so great is the mercy of God to those that obey Him, that though it goes higher and further than the former, yet it renders even the former commandment, not to hate, less arduous: for when commanded not to hate, it is difficult to set about this work, and sufficiently to guard the heart against the avenues of ill-will; but when commanded to love, there

is something to perform, which opens the heart to the Divine mercies, and renders the duty more easy, and at the same time more excellent and more Godlike: for we should perish, if God were content not to hate us His enemies, and did not love us exceedingly. Thus only can we act up to that new condition into which we are brought by Christ, being like Him our Elder Brother from the dead, and accepted in His likeness as true sons of God; *"that ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven, for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust."* He maketh the Sun of Righteousness to arise with healing in His wings on the Gentile and the Jew, on the clean and the unclean alike, on the beloved disciple and the traitor Judas; and raineth down the influences of His Holy Spirit on those who had been His true disciples and followers, and on His murderers: taking the clean and unclean alike into the ark of His Church, being Himself the true Noah, our Comfort and Comforter. *"For if ye love those that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the Publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the Publicans so?"* As ye separate yourselves from others, as Abraham's children and true Israelites, let this separation be marked by excellence greater than theirs, and the seal of Christ and His adoption, Who was used to accept the kiss and salutation of His greatest enemy, the traitor. *"Be ye therefore perfect,"*—not in any great, or heroic, or extraordinary actions, but in unceasing works of mercy—*"even as your Father in Heaven is perfect."* Act up to that perfect pattern of all mercy which is seen in Christ, Who is the Likeness and express Image of the Father,

after Whose likeness He would make mankind anew. "When I rise up after Thy likeness I shall be satisfied with it."

Thus, more and more, from step to step, is the ladder revealed which reaches from earth to Heaven, on which the true Israel may ascend thither; and every part is according to "the pattern showed in the Mount," that other Mountain of Calvary. And if we take these steps up the Mount of Beatitudes, according to the progressive description of St. Chrysostom, they will be gradually unfolded into the following points. The first step is, be not angry with thy brother, nor injure him in thought, word, or deed. The next is, let there be no returning an injury, no retaliation, no eye for an eye, or tooth for a tooth. Thirdly, that we resist not evil, but remain quiet, as sheep among wolves, committing ourselves unto Him that judgeth righteously. Fourthly, that we resist not evil, but offer the other cheek, and give up ourselves, if needful, to further injustice; not holding aloof from him in the suppression of injured pride, or pretended self-protection; but, with true nobleness of heart, still putting ourselves again into his hands. Fifthly, that we be ready to do even more than he wished, who did the wrong, in sweetness of disposition overcoming the evil. The sixth is, not to hate him that hath done so; and the seventh, even to love him. The eighth is, to do him good, even before men and in this world. And the ninth is, to entreat God for him; praying for him in secret, where no eye seeth us, that he may attain the best blessings of God.

Thus do we reap all the beatitudes by becoming such characters as in them are blessed: poor in spirit, meek, and merciful, and peacemakers; and obtain at length a

crown greater than all these, by approaching in resemblance to the adorable perfections of Almighty God. It is the Divine virtue and power that goeth forth from the example of Christ that hallows every step, and draws on His faithful follower towards Him; when, in faith, he thinks of Him, Who was the perfect pattern in each of these progressive steps: "Who did no violence, neither was guile found in His mouth:" "Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously:" Who resisted not, but gave up Himself as a Lamb to the slaughter, when He might have summoned twelve legions of angels to His aid: Who was willing to drink the bitter cup to the dregs; and, when they offered Him the wine and myrrh to deaden the sense of pain, refused to drink, and suffered all without alleviation: Who hated not him who brought Him to this accumulation of woes, but washed the feet of Judas, who was about to betray Him. But not to dwell on each minor point of His perfect example, His whole life being an exercise of transcendent goodness, of loving, and doing good to, and praying for His enemies: Who even, in the hour of agony, healed the wound of one who came to take Him: Who, as they were nailing Him to the Cross, prayed for His murderers; and when they had done all, sent down from Heaven upon that guilty city His best gifts, and blessings of the Holy Spirit. Thus, for those who are brought to Him in faith, the power of His Godhead goes forth from His perfect sacrifice, and His perfect example, and heals the soul: while He writes these His laws on the regenerate heart by the Finger of God. While as Man He teaches, as God He draws us unto Him: as God and Man, He pours into our hearts the inestimable gift of His sacrifice, and moulds our wills to

the inestimable privilege of His example. While, as the mirror of infinite holiness, He bids us stand afar off: as the mirror of infinite love, He bids us approach; that with open face beholding His glory, we may be changed more and more "into the same Image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."

SECTION XIV

ALMS, PRAYER, AND FASTING

SUCH is the kingdom of Heaven upon earth, the riches of the City of God come to be with men; such its inmates; and such their employments; and now we come to the description of the means of entrance to the same, the three gates, as it were, of that Heavenly City. For as such are the children of God, and such their characters: the three great duties of Almsgiving, Prayer, and Fasting, are the three modes by which we may attain unto those Evangelical dispositions. By alms our substance, by prayer our souls, by fasting our bodies, are offered up unto God. These offerings, like the oblations of the Wise men, are three in number; and they probably bear some secret reference to the Persons of the Godhead. Our goods are offered up unto God the Father in return for His unspeakable gift; our souls unto the Spirit of sanctification, that He may renew us day by day, and intercede within us; our bodies as living sacrifices unto God the Son, Who hath taken upon Him our Flesh, and offered up the same in sacrifice unto God upon the Cross. And with regard to us, the threefold oblation will contain every duty; alms, our duty to our neighbour; prayer, our duty to

God ; and fasting, our duty to ourselves ; so that we may live righteously and godly and soberly ; to our neighbour, to God, and to ourselves ; to all separately, to all in each, and to each in all. The Light of this City of God is neither that of the sun nor moon, nor any thing that we behold, but the Lamb is the Light thereof ; in the Light of His countenance, by man unseen, His saints walk therein ; and, therefore, the very essence of all these things is, that they be done unto Him Who seeth in secret. It is the Eye of God and reference to It that hallows all actions, and gives them their religious life ; the eye of the world pollutes and destroys them ; and especially in these three things which were found in the Pharisee in the Temple ; for "he prayed:" he said, "I fast," and "I give tithe." And these warnings commence with the words, "Take heed," for He is about to speak of more subtle enemies, and the serpent that lies hid in the good things of the Gospel : inwreathed, as it were, in the flowers of its Paradise : and striving, by insinuating and silent approaches, that he may find entrance, and spoil all within. For here he takes occasion from the Law which set forth earthly rewards, to instil a love of the same into the kingdom of Heaven, whereas it is still that old serpent that goeth on his belly and feedeth on dust.

"Take ye heed that ye do not your alms before men to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in Heaven." As spoken to the children of adoption, it is all throughout of a Father in Heaven, of treasure and reward laid up with God, and works remembered by Him. *"Therefore, when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward."*

“Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap;” he who sows to man’s applause, shall not reap of God; if you reap your reward on earth, you cannot expect it in Heaven. For it is not the giving of money which is required, but the doing it in a certain manner, and with a certain motive: and if this insidious and most powerful influence of vanity should creep in, it will be like the dead fly “in the ointment of the apothecary,” utterly corrupting all Divine service. It is required, therefore, not only not to display, but studiously to conceal deeds done unto God. “*But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.*” “Thy left hand,” one nearest thine heart; for this desire of approbation in doing alms has often reference to one person near at hand, whose good will is coveted, rather than to the multitude. “*That thine alms may be in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly.*” For he that giveth unto the poor, He says, lendeth unto Himself: He maketh Himself thy debtor: He will repay, and that “openly,” at the great manifestation of all things: but now His attribute is, that He “seeth in secret:” they cannot recompense thee, but “thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.” Until then His attribute is, that He seeth in secret: but then He will “make manifest the counsels of the heart,” and thou shalt have praise of God.

“*And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.*” They “love to pray standing,” whether the expression be taken figuratively or literally, he that loves to pray standing, prays as the hypocrite. “The

disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master." Therefore he that would pray as a Christian, will kneel and fall down before God as Christ did: and although Christ, as our Great High Priest, sometimes "lifted up His eyes to Heaven," and prayed for us, and broke the Bread standing; and His priests in His name officiate standing; and all Christians were used so to do on the Lord's day, and during the festal season from Easter to Pentecost, as risen with Christ, and made in Him Priests unto God: yet, at all times, the natural expression of the heart will be kneeling and prostration: all other worship is from thinking not of God, but from comparing ourselves with other men, and standing alone, as the Pharisee. "*But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and when thou hast shut thy door;*"—the very words indicate preparation and thought;—"pray to thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." This, of course, refers to the spirit and mind in prayer, whether public or private: without going into the market-place, it is possible to pray with manner and voice so as to incur this charge. That we pray "in every place" without noise, or display, with meekness and contrition and inward tears. In a palace on earth all is order and stillness: when admitted to audience with the Most High, the King of kings, and to be heard amongst Angels and Archangels, how deep and still should our devotion be! And the entering into our "closet," or secret chamber, we may take also figuratively with Origen, to signify the withdrawing our minds to God only, Who seeth in secret, avoiding thoughts of men; entering into the closet of the heart where God and Christ have promised to make Their abode; that

then, closing the door of all outward thoughts, we may say "Our Father," and have "our conversation" with Him "in Heaven."

"But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye, therefore, like unto them; for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him." To pray as in God's presence, with faith that He hears, will prevent idle speaking and vain words: it alludes not to frequent use of the same prayers; for our Lord Himself prayed three times, using the same words; and His Church has been ever wont to repeat frequently the *Κύριε ἐλέησον* and the Lord's Prayer: but to long Pharisaical prayers, which, directed towards man, are rather like preaching than praying, and so hardening to the heart, that in connexion with them greatest crimes have been perpetrated. "Much speaking, is one thing," says Augustin; "enduring fervency, another." "Use not many words," says the Wise Man, "in a multitude of elders, and make not much babbling," or "repeat not again," as it is in the Greek, "when thou prayest." The former part of this sentence in Ecclesiasticus will explain the latter; for if "much babbling" indicates a want of reverence even before men, how much more before God?

"After this manner, therefore, pray ye: Our Father, which art in Heaven; hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done in earth as it is in Heaven; Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen." As there will be another opportunity of speaking of this Prayer, all that need here be noticed are the points of

difference between this and the same Prayer as given in St. Luke. The mode in which it is introduced is entirely different: here it is in an exhortation to seriousness in prayer: in St. Luke, when our Lord had been "praying in a certain place," and His disciples asked Him to teach them as John had taught his disciples. And equally different in the two cases is the discourse that follows; for, in St. Matthew, it is of forgiveness of injuries as necessary for prayer; in St. Luke, of importunity and continuance in prayer. Again, in St. Luke, it is "give us daily;" here it is "give us this day." "This day" excludes care for the morrow; implying that, as there is no day when we need it not, so there should be no day when we ask not for it; not only that we may receive what to eat, which all do alike, but that we may receive it to our soul's profit, as coming each day from God's hand, and sanctified to our use. The expression in St. Luke explains St. Matthew's; but St. Matthew's is the more particular application of St. Luke's. The chief point of difference in the two forms is the addition of the doxology in St. Matthew, which is not found in St. Luke, nor in the Vulgate, or Latin Fathers on St. Matthew; but it is in St. Chrysostom and Theophylact, and said to be in the Hebrew and Syriac Versions. As prayer begins with confession of man's weakness, so, as usual in the Psalms, it ends with confession of God's glory, which here seems founded on that of David, "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory; for all that is in the Heaven and in the earth is Thine: Thine is the kingdom³." As the commencement which speaks of God as "Our Father" expresses the Unity, so this termination implies the Three Persons of the Godhead. Thus both

³ 1 Chron. xxix. 11.

are expressed in the same Prayer; as in the repetition, Holy, Holy, Holy, in the seraphic hymn in Isaiah, intimating both Trinity and Unity; and in the Blessing pronounced in the Law, thrice repeating the same Name of God⁴. It is "the kingdom" of Christ which is now come; in "the power" of the Holy Ghost; and to "the glory" of God the Father. And, perhaps, in this place this confession may have a particular reference, as St. Chrysostom supposes, to "the evil one," from whom we pray to be delivered, because to God all things shall bow, and be put under His feet in His kingdom; for the kingdom, the power, and the glory are His, Who is over all blessed for evermore.

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." The two requisites for the efficacy of prayer ever mentioned in Scripture, are forgiveness of injuries and faith; as St. Paul says, "every where lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting⁵." Forgiving others is performing our part as forgiven of God—is the genuine test of the love of God, without which faith profits not—is partaking of Christ's likeness, in which alone we are accepted; and therefore it is not said, without which God will not forgive you, but "your Father;" it is the mark of sonship, the pledge of adoption, the earnest of God's forgiveness, the sharing in Christ's anointing. It is, as Augustin observes, of all the petitions enjoined by the Lord, that which He most judged worthy of enforcement, as the only means of escaping from misery⁶.

"Moreover, when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance; for they disfigure," or make desolate,

⁴ Numb. vi. 24. 26. ⁵ 1 Tim. ii. 8. ⁶ Sermon in Mont. ii. 11.

"their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." For great sorrow hideth itself, and hath no where else to hide itself but in the bosom of that Father which it hath offended. But even this fasting differs from that of the Law, from the Baptismal *washing* and the *anointing* of the Spirit that accompanies it; which may well render even this cross full of comfort to them that thus fast, and the countenance glad from the presence of that Comforter Who is with them that mourn—that mourn as "the children of the bridechamber⁷," when the Bridegroom withdraws the light of His countenance. Fasting is the natural expression of repentance, the union of the soul to Christ's atoning sacrifice, by participation in His sufferings. Although here taught in conjunction with alms and prayer, yet throughout the Scriptures, for some wise reasons, it is not so much positively commanded, as encouraged, by indirect inference and allusion, and by the example of all good men—of Moses, of David, of Daniel, of Elijah, of Ezra, of St. Peter, of St. Paul, of the good Cornelius, of the Apostles generally, and of Christ Himself; by the acceptance given it in the case of Ahab, and of the Ninevites; by the promise of a reward here made by Christ. He shall reward "openly" before men, by those good fruits which spring from fasting, such as cheerfulness of temper; for the light thus replenished in secret will shine before men: and still more "openly" will He reward it in the great manifestation of all things on the last day. For such mortifica-

tion is in itself full of the earnest of future rewards : as sensuality binds the soul to the world, fasting opens it to heavenly-mindedness and all the fruits of the Spirit.

The subjects which now ensue flow in immediate connexion from those three duties prescribed : for the right observance of those duties consisted in their being so performed, that He who seeth in secret may reward them openly. That which now is enjoined, therefore, is of treasure laid up in Heaven ; of the heart that follows being in Heaven also ; of the single eye here on earth, and one Master only ; of undivided care, given up solely to the one thing which is needful ; of faith gaining spiritual wisdom from the marks of God's Presence around us, in the bright vesture of natural objects, and in the brute animals around, which indicate the protecting hand of God. "*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal : but lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal : for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*" Compactly and in most touching words is it laid down what Aristotle[•] takes so much pains to prove, that the love of every virtue will grow out of the continued and self-denying practice of it : for the practice of every virtue is the laying up treasure in Heaven, and the heart and affections will follow, rendering the pursuit of those things, when they become habitual, full of delight. And of the next great truth also, uninspired reason found indications ; for virtue, according to the same writer, becomes the eye of the soul. "*The light of the body is the eye ; if, therefore, thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of*

• Ethics, lib. ii. cap. 3, and lib. x.

light. *But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness !*" There is, therefore, a putting out the light within us, and "the whole body" becoming full of darkness, the eyes blinded, the ears dull of hearing, the heart incapable of understanding. What the eye is to the body, such is faith to the soul, which perceives God illuminating all things, as the sun in the Heavens ; and ministers new powers to all the bodily senses ; so that the eyes may gather wisdom from the flowers of the field and birds of the air, the ears from precepts of wisdom, and "the whole body" be full of the power of resurrection. "*No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.*" As He had said before, that they who look to the world have their reward, and that He will reward those who look to Him in secret, He thus puts the same in a proverbial form of speech, of still more extensive application. "*Therefore, I say unto you, take no thought*"—i. e. no anxious care—"for your life"—for the animal life, as Augustin explains it ; as we find the expression in other parts of Scripture ; but of course in the Greek it may signify "for the soul," as St. Chrysostom observes, and so imply in what follows the greater value of the soul than these temporal things—"what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink ; nor yet for the body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment ? Behold the fowls of the air,"—as Job had said, "Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee ; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee ;,"—"for they sow not, neither do they reap,

nor gather into barns; yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them." "These all wait upon Thee, that Thou mayest give them meat in due season;" "the lions seek their meat from God;" and "He feedeth the young ravens that call upon Him¹." "*Are ye not much better than they?*" All these are made for man, but man for God Himself; and He does not speak of God as the Father of these His creatures, nor as the Father of mankind, but as "your Father;" as your's above all, in an especial sense, who are made the children of God in Christ. And after all, what does your anxious carefulness avail? "*Which of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit unto his stature?*" Some moderns, indeed, would render it as if it were, "one span to his life;" but not with such propriety, for this may seem to be effected by human carefulness, but not the other.

"*And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.*" "And in truth," says St. Jerome, "what silk, what purple of kings, what embroidered tapestry can be compared with flowers? What redness is like that of the rose? What whiteness like that of the lily? That no purple dye can surpass that of the violet, sight alone and not words can prove²." If these lilies here pointed out were the large lilies or the crown imperial, which is common in Judea, their white and silvery appearance may be the thing alluded to, and be here compared not to the purple robe of kings, but to the white. Thus Herod Antipas in mockery clothed Christ in a white robe; and the other Herod, as if by Divine judgment for that crime, was "arrayed in royal apparel³"

¹ Ps. civ. 27. 21; cxlvii. 9. ² In Matt. ad loc. ³ Acts xii. 21

when eaten of worms: which Josephus describes as a robe of silver tissue glittering in the rising sun. But the flower here alluded to was no doubt common, and one would naturally suppose humble in appearance; for the more mean the flower is, the more force and beauty does it add to the figure. If we consider the glory of Solomon to be the usual purple robe of kings, it may be that the lilies were, what they are supposed to signify in other places in Scripture, the autumnal crocus, which is more of that colour; a flower of texture and symmetry so fragile, and so singular in its formation and character, as to bear the especial mark of a protecting providence. All the differences which wealth may occasion are, indeed, very inferior to those which are bestowed on all alike; for the sight of the Heavens, and of the birds of the air, and of the flowers of the field, is common to all, that they may discern therein indications of their Father's hand: wealth may afford differences, but those secondary to these, and being selfish are of evil, and their pleasures less pure. "He made every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew⁴;" and every flower bears marks of His Hand: and therefore says Job, "Speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee;" and David, "Praise Him ye fruitful trees, and all cedars." *"Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"* Not of the clothing of our animal life merely does this speak, surely, for of that it is so often said in Scripture, that it "flourisheth as a flower of the field," the very emblem of its frailty; but how much more will He clothe the soul with His own secret Spirit, and with Christ's white robe, or

⁴ Gen. ii. 5.

His own purple garment of blood, the vesture of immortality ; building it up and weaving its admirable texture even here by the dews of His Spirit, and the rays of the Sun of Righteousness? These lilies of the field are the humble and meek-spirited, that hide their faces on the ground ; but all the boasted works of worldly genius and greatness are not to be compared to the works of God's Hand, as found in their souls.

"Be not ye, therefore, careful, saying, What shall we eat? or What shall we drink? or With what shall we be clothed? For all these things the nations" of the world *"seek after."* Whereas ye are spoken of throughout as being children of a Father in Heaven, having an inheritance and home with Him ; and anxiety on these matters indicates a distrust of His presence or of His Fatherly care ; *"For your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."* Ye should always live above the world, "casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you⁵;" He knoweth that we have need of these things, and if He gives not, it is that He is waiting in order that we may ask, and that by asking we may receive more abundantly.

We must have His assistance to enable us to free ourselves from anxieties by throwing them on His Fatherly breast : to obtain this His favour must be the one and great object of our whole lives, and so great an object of care as to admit of no other, not only of none prior and stronger, but not even as secondary to it. This one and one only subject of our thoughtfulness now follows. *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness ; and all these things shall be added unto you :"* for godliness hath the promise of the life which

⁵ 1 Pet. v. 7.

now is as well as of that which is to come⁶; and they who relinquish earthly things for its sake "shall receive an hundredfold in this present time." *"Take therefore no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."* "The evil thereof," is a far better mode of rendering it than the old translations, "his own grief," and "his own trouble," or "afflictio," the Latin rendering of Erasmus, or "its own maliciousness," from the Latin "malitia;" for the word "evil" is capable of the two senses of the Greek. St. Chrysostom indeed maintains it to signify not the wickedness, but the affliction of the day; so also St. Jerome, Tertullian, and others; and such is, no doubt, the more obvious and commonly received interpretation among both ancient and modern writers: yet the words are capable of the other meaning also; and St. Hilary so takes it, that "we are commanded not to be distracted concerning things future, since the sins of the day in which we live are sufficient to occupy all our thought and labour, in order to cleanse and expiate the same⁷." And certainly the injury of these worldly cares is, that they greatly prevent our overcoming the moral evil of the passing day. In either of both senses, therefore, we may take it to our great profit.

SECTION XV

PROVERBIAL PRECEPTS OF THE GOSPEL

BUT no sooner is the conscience awakened to the knowledge of right, without the full performance of the same,

⁶ 1 Tim. iv. 8.

⁷ Com. in Matt. v. 13.

than the mind is turned to the discernment of those faults in others which in itself it corrects not: "the candle of the Lord in man searcheth," says Scripture, "the inward parts of the belly⁸;" but in many, who are only half-reformed, when it is thus kindled, it is made use of to bring to light the faults of others. To this vice the Pharisees were especially addicted, from their knowledge of the truth without amendment of heart: such is the case in the Pharisee of the parable, who is praying in the Temple, and appears to be given as a type of that class; it is evident in many instances of them in the Gospels; and from St. Paul's earnest appeal to the Jews on this subject of their unkind condemnation of others, in his Epistle to the Romans⁹. "*Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.*" In another place in Scripture we have a corresponding precept, "if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged¹." The same temper of heart that judges oneself is least inclined to judge others: and as the merciful shall obtain mercy, as those who forgive shall obtain forgiveness, as charity "suffereth long and is kind," and shall cover a multitude of sins, therefore it will be meted to us according to our measure. And, besides, this judging of others is assuming to ourselves the Judge's seat; "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth²."

"*And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?*" Is it then always the case, that he who

⁸ Prov. xx. 27.

⁹ Rom. ii.

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 31.

² Rom. xiv. 4.

spies a small defect in his brother, has a larger one in himself? It is so, inasmuch as every one who knows his own heart must know more evil of himself than he can know of another; and that charity feareth always for itself, but for others "thinketh no evil," believeth and "hopeth all things." Particular sins, and all aggravations of those sins, are best known to oneself: and love weighs most those aggravations, sees not palliations; but the contrary in the case of others; much more is it so with the uncharitable and censorious, that each hath a beam in his own eye for every mote he discerneth in another. "*Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.*" It is not, therefore, all "judging" of others which is condemned, but the most effectual mode of friendly reproof and correction is taught, viz. by beginning with ourselves first of all. The science of converting others consists in self-conversion; amendment of the heart is light unto the eyes, and keeping of the commandments gives more understanding than length of days. All reproof becomes otherwise no better than hypocrisy; for from what motive does it proceed? not from charity to save your neighbour, as has been well observed³, "for else you would save yourself. Your desire is not to heal others, but by good doctrine to cover a bad life." There is ever pride in such reproof, which renders others unwilling to receive it.

"Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under

³ Pseudo Chrys. Aur. Cat.

their feet, and turn again and rend you." There is a reserve in religious wisdom that best promotes the ends of holiness; and indeed it is necessary, for if there is a knowledge that arises from a Divine life, it cannot be communicated without that life. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned⁴." Of such St. Paul says, taught by experience, "Alexander the copper-smith did me much evil. Of whom be thou ware also⁵;" and "a man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject⁶." And herein are contained two important truths, the one is, "they tread them under foot,"—they defile by irreverence what they cannot understand, which might naturally be expected: but the other is a great mystery, set forth in the experience of all times and histories, they turn again with ill will, and rend those that bring before them things so holy and valuable. With regard to the term "pearls," it occurs again in this sense in the parable of "the merchant-man seeking goodly pearls," or precepts of Divine wisdom, who findeth the one of great value, the knowledge of Christ: and here it is well explained as the mysteries of truth; for "as pearls are enclosed in shells, and hidden in the depths of the sea, so the Divine mysteries, enclosed in words, are lodged in the deep meaning of Holy Scripture⁷."

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." As if even this strong assurance was not enough to support our weakness, He again repeats the same declaration in a new and still more emphatic form. "*For every one that asketh receiveth;*

⁴ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

⁵ 2 Tim. iv. 15.

⁶ Titus iii. 10.

⁷ Pseudo Chrys. Aur. Cat.

and he that seeketh findeth ; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." The knocking, as St. Chrysostom says, implies earnest and strong intention and importunity. And we may observe a circumstance which adds unspeakable weight to the expression, that the very same figure is used in contrast concerning a time when the door shall be shut, and it will be too late to knock. "When the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us⁸," and shall ask, and seek, and knock, yet knock in vain. But now the door is closed in order that we may knock. And not only this, but the very same figure⁹ is used to express our Lord's earnest desire that we should ask ; as if it were we that closed the door, and He were the Suppliant : "Behold, I stand at the door and knock ; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him¹ ;" and the Church, as listening for the same, says, "I sleep, but my heart waketh ; it is the voice of my Beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me²." And this waiting and listening in order to hear His coming, is the description of fidelity which He Himself hath given, "that when He cometh and knocketh, they may open to Him immediately³." But here, as in other cases, the full aptness of the figure will appear more clearly from another place, where the same occurs ; for in St. Luke's Gospel the whole parallel passage arises out of the Parable, wherein fervency of prayer is represented, in the "friend" "coming at midnight," and knocking with importunity at the door of his neighbour. But the ensuing Parable of the parent and child, which occurs in both passages, is very much

⁸ Luke xiii. 25. ⁹ See The Holy Week, p. 336. ¹ Rev. iii. 20.

² Cant. v. 2.

³ Luke xii. 36.

in character with the whole of this Sermon on the Mount, which is replete with expressions of Fatherly relation and tenderness. "*Or what man is there of you whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?*" The "bread" and the "fish" are ever occurring together, as replete with mysterious and spiritual meaning, as figures of something with which our Heavenly Father is ever feeding His children⁴. "*If ye then, being evil,*"—being evil in comparison with the exceeding goodness of God; being evil as man is ever described in Scripture; "the imagination of the thoughts of his heart being only evil continually⁵." "If ye then, being evil, *know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask Him?*" or, as it is in St. Luke, "give the Holy Spirit." This seems to indicate that our Lord did repeat the same things on two occasions with such a variety; and they mutually explain each other, for it implies that there are no things which are truly good but the Holy Spirit, "the unspeakable Gift." "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

"*All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the Law and the Prophets.*" From practical matters He comes to prayer; and from prayer immediately returns to practice: for each sanctifies the other, "whatsoever we ask we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments⁶;" and "whoso stoppeth his ear to the cry of the poor, he shall cry, and shall not be heard⁷." And if prayer is not

⁴ As Matt. xiv. 17; xv. 34. John xxi. 9.

⁵ Gen. vi. 5.

⁶ 1 John iii. 22.

⁷ Prov. xxi. 13.

heard without keeping the commandments, neither on the other hand can the commandments be kept without prayer. This precept seems to stand out by itself; and yet the word "therefore" seems to connect it with the preceding statement, as if it had been said, such is "fatherly kindness," as implanted in fathers by the Father of us all; yet not that only, but whatsoever else is good amongst men is the rule of God's dealings with you. It could not be said, that your prayers may be heard, you must render to others such as you ask for from God; but it is said, that your prayers may be heard, you must render the same to your neighbour that you would wish to receive from him. So shall you fulfil the Law and the Prophets, and by fulfilling the Law and the Prophets, ye shall be children of God, and shall be heard by Him as your heavenly Father.

"Enter ye in at the strait gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." The narrow way is a road that is to be found, as St. Jerome says; not so the broad way, which is the way that presents itself to all, and along which all they who go astray are travelling. To find the strait gate needs the single eye, exercised in the discernment of good and evil, and already practised in all the holy rules that are gone before. And this even moral philosophy taught, as Pythagoras by his emblematic sayings, that evil is indefinite and good finite; that evil is manifold and good but single; and the Stagyrice, that virtue is a mark which it is hard to hit, but easy to miss⁸. And so it is with all earthly good things that bear the shadow of it, the end is

⁸ Arist. Ethic. lib. ii. cap. vi.

enveloped in the dangers that encompass it*: all run, but one obtaineth the prize. "Grant, O Jesus," said Bishop Wilson, in his Prayers, "that I may never flatter myself, or others, on this subject." And surely there must be some terrible self-deceit, that after this declaration of Christ, so many should be content to be as the multitude, without fear of the issue. It has been observed, as in the way of figurative interpretation, that the "broad way" is the Devil, the way made broad by pride; and the strait gate is Christ: for Christ is "the door," made small by humiliation. And as Christ is the door, so is He also the "narrow way; He is Himself "the way that leadeth unto life;" and He is that life; He is the beginning, and He is the end. He that met Christ at the gate of the earthly Jerusalem, had to bear His Cross, and follow Him along the way; and so all must do who would come after Him. But still His yoke is easy, and His burden light: for in bearing His Cross they approach unto Him; and so partake of that healing and virtue that goeth forth from Him. The spirit must be reduced by mortification; the flesh by abstinence; and pride by humiliation, before we shall be small enough to enter in at the strait gate: but afterwards is there the true liberty of the children of God. "Thou hast known my soul in adversities" precedes; but then it follows, "Thou hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy, but hast set my feet in a large room¹."

"*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing,*" in the very form and semblance of Christianity;

* πόνος μάργναται πρὸς
ἔργον κινδύνῳ κεκαλυμμένον.

Pind. Ol. v. 35.

¹ Ps. xxxi. 8, 9.

"but inwardly they are ravening wolves." After more open enemies, and the broad way, more secret foes are mentioned, with the exhortation to "take heed," an expression that ever implies the need of watchfulness and caution : often are these warnings given, "take heed that no man deceive you ;" "many shall come in My Name, and shall deceive many : " and the exceeding deceivableness ever attributed to them is such that, if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect. *"Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit ; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit."* This sounds hard, but Aristotle had declared the same in moral philosophy² ; and St. John the Divine in Christian ethics, that a good man cannot do evil. The just man may indeed fall seven times a day with reference to that perfection which he might attain : and men may change ; good may become bad, and bad may become good ; but so far as they continue good they cannot sin wilfully and habitually ; for "whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin ;" "he cannot sin, because he is born of God ;" "he keepeth himself, and that Wicked one toucheth him not³." *"Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."* Another instance in which our Blessed Lord confirms the teaching of the Baptist by using his very words. *"Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."* Not that by their works we are to judge of their authority and commission, but of their doctrine ; for they may sit in Moses' seat, and be in their lives children of the devil ; yet it is said, "whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do ; but do not ye after their

² Ethics, lib. v. cap. ix.

³ 1 John iii. 9 ; v. 18.

works." While we show dutiful obedience to their authority, yet their lives and their own doctrines, which are the result of those lives, we are to avoid with extreme carefulness. But again, we are here told that we are to judge of them by their lives ; yet it has been just said that we are not to judge ; especially are we not to judge our teachers⁴. Besides which, there is a difficulty in judging aright, for some are as "whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful without, but within are full of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness." Yet, on the whole, notwithstanding, deeds are the tongue of the heart ; out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh : deeds and words therefore will show the heart ; and a good heart cannot retain evil, nor a bad heart receive good doctrine. There is in holiness of life something that will draw unto it the hearts of those that are born of God : the genuine light of God cannot be hid : as at sea it is said that a cloud may be mistaken for land, yet no experienced eye ever took land for a cloud. It may be observed that, notwithstanding their great popularity, there is no continuance or stability in unsound doctrines ; in the long run the evil tree will bear evil fruits, and will then be withered. Thus, therefore, it is in prophecy, "every plant which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up : " and in experience, "I went by, and lo, he was gone !" But the manner of expression itself implies the need of discernment to ascertain and follow the rule ; it is given as a mode of distinguishing truth in difficulties ; heresies will be allowed to arise for this very purpose, that soundness in the faith may be known by the rejection of them ; and this power of discernment will depend on our own lives. It is given as a secret and mystery of inestimable value ; and what-

⁴ 1 Cor. iv. 5.

ever difficulty there may be in the full explanation of it, thus far we see, that where truth is received in the world, it is received on account of holiness of life in those who maintain it; the blood of martyrs is ever found on the seal that stamps the truth. When there is a difference of opinion between two guides which a man has been used to follow, no reasoning decides the case for the single-minded follower of Christ; but the marks of consistent holiness on one open the heart to abide with him. Faith has its foundation in the life and actions; and the voice of faith is a voice from the other world.

“Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in Heaven.” This may apply either to apparent fervency in prayer, when found together with hypocrisy of life and unclean hands; or to the zeal of professed discipleship; perhaps it is intended to include both, as the following verse seems to indicate. Reprobation is again here described in the instances of those who have had the semblance of good, as was especially the case with the Pharisees; and with the traitor Judas: and indeed it comes even into the description of Antichrist, that he shall “sit in the Temple of God.” St. Augustin observes that these persons are here spoken of as calling Christ Lord, and yet the Apostle says, “no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost⁵.” But this admits of an easy explanation; for in this place the words are used in self-deceiving hypocrisy; but in the passage from St. Paul, the word “say” implies the full purpose of the will and understanding. So that in fact the declarations are not contrary, but mutually require and explain the full force of each other.

⁵ 1 Cor. xii. 3.

"Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy Name? and in Thy Name have cast out devils? and in Thy Name done many wonderful works?" It is evident that great miraculous powers might exist without holiness of life, as appears in the disorderly use of those gifts, which St. Paul reproves among the Corinthians; from his saying that there may be a faith even to remove mountains, yet profit not to salvation; that eloquent preaching may be no better than "sounding brass:" and our Lord says, "in this rejoice not, that the devils are subject unto you," but in your Baptismal privileges, "that your names are written in Heaven." *"And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; Depart from Me, ye that work iniquity⁶."* "Working" iniquity, "working" righteousness, it is all dependent on this, "Inasmuch as ye have *done* it,"—"inasmuch as ye have *done* it not;" he that heareth and *"doeth;"* he that heareth and *"doeth not."*

"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded on a rock." What is fulfilled in the Christian is found in some sense in Christ Himself; He also hath built His House on the Rock, against which the gates of Hell shall not prevail: all heresies are unstable, and as a house built on the sand: the Godhead of Christ, the Word Incarnate, is the Rock upon which every thing must be built that will endure that Day. *"And every one that heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and*

⁶ See The Holy Week, 337, 338, 364.

the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it." Such is the consummation of all things, and the time of the great trial: "Every one that is godly shall make his prayer unto Thee, in a time when Thou mayest be found: but in the great waterfloods they shall not come nigh Him⁷." As with the wise and foolish Virgins in the parable, so with these houses, there is no apparent outward difference till the great trial arrives: and then the difference is found to consist,—on that on which the judgment of the great Day ever depends,—on obedience,—on our works,—on holiness as unto God in secret; this only is building upon Christ Who is the Rock: building in secret on Him Unseen; nay, this is Christ Himself in us, Who is our obedience, when we are grounded and built up in Him. All else is vain: the trust of the hypocrite "shall be a spider's web:" "he shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand:" "his confidence shall bring him to the king of terrors⁸."

"And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine: For He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes" (Matt.). He taught them as the Lawgiver and Judge; His Godhead and unspeakable attributes break forth in every part of His doctrine; not as expounding what Moses and the Prophets had said, but laying down His own full meaning in what they had delivered as His servants; declaring in distinction from them, "but I say unto you," and referring all things to His own final Judgment, "many shall say unto Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not done many things in Thy Name?" They were astonished in delightful awe and wonder; and not terrified as by the thunderings and

⁷ Ps. xxxii. 6.

⁸ Job viii. 14, 15; xviii. 14.

lightnings, and the terrible voice of Mount Sinai ; but "astonished at His doctrine," at the knowledge and power of the great Physician ; Who knew so well the secret maladies of them all ; and by His very words had power to heal them.

SECTION XVI

THE MIRACULOUS DRAUGHT OF FISHES

THE account of our Lord's Ministry in Galilee, during this first year, seems in St. Luke's Gospel to be confined to the synagogue, excepting in this incident which now occurs, where, after saying that He was "teaching in their synagogue," St. Luke adds this mention of His teaching the people by the lake. According to the order of events in St. Matthew's Gospel, the Sermon on the Mount naturally finds its place at this time ; and this arrangement will derive confirmation from this mention in St. Luke, which indicates that His teaching at this time was not confined to the synagogue ; and will sanction this introduction of the two together. In the previous narrative we have disciples, long since introduced to Christ on the banks of Jordan ; continuing with Him in Judea ; and not only this, but four of them solemnly called to forsake all and follow Him, as they were engaged in their customary occupation on the lake. Now we find that there was a very high and peculiar exercise of faith, in which our Lord afterwards exercised and trained His Apostles during His visible sojourn with them in the flesh ; which is mentioned when He commissioned them to go forth "without scrip or purse," and spoken of in His appeal to them at

the last Supper, when He asks whether they had not found all that they required without temporal means of support. But to high exercises of faith men are gradually prepared ; and it is natural to suppose that, although now with Him and called, they still needed confirmation and instruction in this their purpose of relinquishing all for His sake ; and this the ensuing miracle seems to supply ?

“And when He was come down from the Mountain,” says St. Matthew, *“great multitudes followed Him”* (Matt.). *“And it came to pass”* (Luke), on another occasion, after the Sermon on the Mount, and when He was now come down to the neighbourhood of Capernaum and the sea, *“that the people pressed upon Him to hear the Word of God ; and He Himself was standing by the lake of Gennesareth. And He saw two boats standing by the lake : but the fishermen, having gone out of them, were washing their nets. And having entered into one of the ships, which was Simon’s ;”—for He thus gave the pre-eminence to Simon, though John was first called and the much loved ; add to which that the other boat was Zebedee’s, not John’s : and having entered it, “He prayed him to thrust out a little from the land ;”* He passes from the ground which was cursed ; on the waters of Baptism must His Church be launched forth, before He teaches therein. *“And He sat down, and taught the people from the boat. Now when He had ceased speaking, He said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto Him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing ;”* and therefore, humanly speaking, there is no chance of success ; *“never-*

• See Study of the Gospels, pp. 363. 372

theless at Thy word I will let down the net." Every miracle, every blessing of faith is upon obedience; to toil without Christ is in vain; but when at His word, nothing shall be impossible; for the night is passing away, and the true Light now shineth upon the waters. *"And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes, and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other boat, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink."*

This very beautiful and affecting incident is in every way full of matter for devout contemplation; first of all from its obvious instruction: He had moved St. Peter by His discourses, and now by this miracle He encourages him in the lesson that He had taught, "seek ye first the kingdom of Heaven, and its righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you." It is to each in his own calling that Christ appears, and makes it subservient to His own high purposes: He Who, in condescension to mankind, called the Magians by a Star, as St. Chrysostom observes, calls these fishermen by means of their own craft. Again, God is therein repaying after the mode of His own repayment: St. Peter had lent Christ His boat, Who rewardeth all men liberally, and taketh no man's service for nought. As Abraham, on receiving the Divine guests, was given to take part with the Great Intercessor; as Elijah, being sustained in the house of the widow of Sarepta, himself supported her by the barrel of meal and cruse of oil, and gave her a son; as Elisha requited his Shunammite hostess by restoring her son to life; as salvation came to the house of Zaccheus on his receiving Christ therein; as whosoever gives a cup of cold water to a servant of Christ shall not

lose his reward ; so Simon, independently of the inconceivable privilege, yet, even to speak after a human manner, for the use of his boat receives an hundredfold in this present time. That the circumstance, also, as a figure, is replete with spiritual instruction, seems naturally to occur to all, and is suggested by our Lord Himself in His words afterwards to St. Peter. That the ship represents the Church ; that St. Peter's launching forth into the deep, is the going forth into the knowledge of the Son of God, the mysteries of the kingdom ; that it is filled at last to overflowing by obedience to the word of Christ, which cannot return unto Him void : that the breaking of the nets is the rending of Church discipline, from the untold multitudes which shall at length flock into it ; that the two boats signify the two Churches of the Jew and the Gentile, or that from one Church other Churches also shall be filled ; that unity shall be broken by heresies and schisms, and that the ship shall begin to sink, for that "in the last days perilous times shall come ;" that the Church shall seem failing ; but shall not fail, for Christ is in it : these things are dwelt upon by St. Ambrose, Augustin, Cyril, Gregory, Bede, and others ; and will naturally suggest themselves to a mind which, impressed with the importance of all things in Christ's kingdom, is used to perceive such analogies of things heavenly in sensible occurrences.

"When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me ; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." As Manoah said, "we shall surely die, because we have seen God¹ ;" as the widow of Zarephath said to Elijah, "what have I to do with thee, O thou man of God ? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to

¹ Judges xiii. 22.

slay my son²?" as the Prophet Daniel, even at the vision of Christ's kingdom, says, "there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength³:" as the good Centurion entreated that Christ would not enter under his roof: as the Publican in the Temple stood afar off, and would not lift up so much as his eyes to Heaven; so St. Peter sees and believes, and his belief calls up the consciousness of his sins, and he trembles at the sense of them. "*For he was astonished, and as many as were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken. And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon.*" "As many as were with him," seems to be said in distinction from James and John, who are immediately afterwards mentioned, which, together with His previous teaching of the multitude out of the ship, clearly indicates the presence of many persons with them; whereas the similar incident in the other two Evangelists seems of a much more private nature, as He was walking alone by the lake. "*And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not,*" the very fear itself releases thee from the cause of fear: for his fear he is accepted; and upon his confession his Lord hastens as His Prophet to David, saying, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." It was the cry of distressed human nature, as was heard in Israel of old, "Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, that I die not:" but it was that gracious Prophet Whom God in His compassion had promised to raise up from among them, and to Whom they should hearken⁴, and, if they hearken unto Him, shall not die. And the Prophet Habakkuk, drawing near, as encouraged by this wonderful graciousness of God, says, "Art Thou not from

² 1 Kings xvii. 18.³ Dan. x. 8.⁴ Deut. xviii. 15.

everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One? We shall not die." "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." The mighty Healer Himself hastens with relief, and not only with relief for what is past, but to crown his fears with inestimable privileges, and promises exceeding high; even as on the Last Day, they who shall come in much diffidence and great trembling, shall not only obtain forgiveness, but authority also and power and joy. "Fear not, *from henceforth thou shalt catch men*;" shalt take men alive in thy net, as the original implies: this great miracle is but to teach thee of greater things for which thou art called. And this humiliation in St. Peter shall be the beginning of all success; for now he discerns Christ therein, and shall no longer sacrifice to his net: for as the last-mentioned Prophet proceeds, "Thou makest men as the fishes of the sea." "They catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag; therefore they rejoice and are glad. Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag; because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous⁵." But it shall not be so from henceforth with Simon: he is taught by this lesson that all things are of God; and if so even in things natural, and such as are needful for bodily sustenance, how much more in the spiritual things of His kingdom? He shall seem to toil long in vain, and when he succeeds hereafter he shall attribute his success therein to Christ alone. "I will go forth in the strength of the Lord God; and will make mention of Thy righteousness only." And here, as in other instances, parable and miracle mutually explain each other, and form one language; for the parable of the net cast into the sea, and this draught of fishes, are but in

⁵ Hab. i. 15, 16.

fact parts of one lesson, and couched under one figure. We, also, have seen the same miracle in its fulness ; we have seen the Church, full of souls, and gathering of every kind, according to the command of Christ, "Go forth into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that My house may be filled ;" "Launch forth into the deep, and let down the net ;" or, "Go forth, and baptize all nations :;" we have seen the net break with the vast multitudes even now of every kind, as it is dragged to shore : we discern the power of Christ's command ; and would to God we might all, with St. Peter, debase ourselves in trembling at the presence of Christ discerned therein ! But, alas ! the Church itself, as St. Austin suggests, overwhelmed by the multitude of men, and the net of her discipline breaking, seems to say to Christ by her actions, "Depart from me, O Lord ;" to say so not in humiliation, as St. Peter, but in impenitence.

"And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed Him."

SECTION XVII

THE LEPER HEALED

BETWEEN the incident last mentioned on the lake, and the calling of Levi, another disciple, when our Lord was again teaching by the lake, there are two miracles which seem to intervene, from a comparison of the three narratives. Of these one is a leper in the public street, and the other a paralytic in the house ; as the last recorded was the demoniac restored in the synagogue. If we look to a spiritual meaning in this order of the narrative as applied to Israel, it seems that first of all the devil is cast

out ; then the leprosy of sin is cleansed ; and thirdly, strength is given to the palsied limbs, which are again put under the control of the will. And there is a teaching contained in it with regard to the immediate occasion also : He had now preached to them of the Kingdom ; but the crowd which heard was full of leprosy : how, therefore, could they enter in at the gates of that Heavenly City, but in the manner which is now so sensibly and visibly set before them ? The case was in itself a very striking one : we may give the three accounts of the leper's coming separately, for they are full of interesting detail and descriptiveness. "*And behold there came a leper, and worshipped Him, saying—*" (Matt.), "*and there cometh unto Him a leper, entreating Him, and kneeling down to Him, and saying—*" (Mark). It was after our Lord's coming down from the Sermon on the Mount, and while apparently He was still surrounded by the crowds ; and it appears from St. Luke, that it occurred in one of their cities, among which we lately found He was going. "*And it came to pass, when He was in one of their cities, behold, a man full of leprosy ; and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face, and besought Him, saying—*" (Luke). He was indeed a very loathsome object, "full of leprosy." But when they come to detail the exact words which the poor suppliant used, there is a remarkable identity of expression in the three Evangelists : "*Lord*" (Matt. Luke), "*if Thou wilt, Thou art able to make me clean*" (Matt. Mark, Luke). The prayer was indeed most worthy of all record, not only from the very sublime simplicity of the short entreaty, but for the great faith it implied ; the power is attributed to the mere volition of Christ ; a power to take away, by His will alone, all natural and legal uncleanness. He worships Him as God, kneeling

and falling prostrate before Him ; he addresses Him not as a Prophet, not as one whose prayer must avail with the Father, but as God, saying, "Thou art able:" and there is something of devout resignation even in the prayer ; he does not even ask, but says, "if Thou wilt, Thou art able;" as if secretly intimating, "yet not my will, but Thine be done." "The confession," says St. Ambrose, "is one full of devotion and faith, placing all power in the will of the Lord." And St. Chrysostom, "Great was the understanding and the faith of him who so drew near. Not at random, but with much earnestness, and at His knees he beseeches Him, with the genuine faith and right opinion concerning Him. For neither did he say, 'if Thou request it of God,' nor 'if Thou pray,' but 'if Thou wilt, Thou art able.' Nor did he say, 'Lord, cleanse me,' but leaves all to Him⁶." The exceeding acceptableness of this remarkable prayer is shown by our Lord's reply, in taking up the very words of the petition, and thus indeed secretly confessing His Godhead : whereas to a request that attributes to Him less power, even in granting, He answered with complaint or correction. Moreover, not only does He thus speak, but causes His three Evangelists to record His very words ; while St. Mark alone adds that which relates not so much to higher points of doctrine, but rather to personal interest, if we may so speak, concerning the Son of Man. "*And being moved with compassion*" (Mark) "*Jesus*" (Matt. Mark) "*stretched forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will, be thou clean*" (Matt. Mark, Luke). "*And when He had spoken*" (Mark), "*immediately*" (Matt. Mark, Luke) "*the leprosy departed from him*" (Mark, Luke) "*and he was cleansed*" (Mark), "*his leprosy was cleansed*" (Matt.). The mere act of

⁶ In Matt. Hom. xxv. 2. Ox. Tr.

touching him appears emphatically mentioned also in the three accounts as important; the more so, as touching a leper came itself under the specification of the Law: our Lord thereby seems to become Himself unclean in the eyes of the Law, and to take upon Himself the uncleanness of the leper: and in this very much was implied, viz. that in healing the diseases of men He took upon Himself the penalty of those maladies of the soul which were thus visited; for thus the expression, "He Himself took our infirmities and carried our diseases," is applied both to our Lord's healing diseases, and to His suffering for our sins on the cross⁷. He took upon Him our uncleanness and the curse of the Law, "being made a curse for us." For leprosy was the great type of sin, from the loathsomeness of it, for it was as it were a living death, or a state of animated corruption, from its extremely infectious or contagious nature. And this was shown in the cleansing of the leper according to the Law, which was not without a sacrifice solemnly appointed, wherewith "the Priest shall make an atonement for him that is to be cleansed before the Lord⁸." For thus our Lord put Himself in the place of that victim according to the Law: He Who knew no sin became Himself sin for us, that we might be made in Him the righteousness of God: He became Himself as the serpent, the very emblem of sin and death, that we might be healed from the serpent's wounds: as the hand of Moses became leprous that it might be again restored, as the dead bones of Elisha gave life, as Christ Himself became dead that we might live, so now He becomes unclean that we might be made clean in Him. But St. Chrysostom, who thinks the act very remarkable, differently explains it: "It is a thing especially worthy of

⁷ See pp. 422, 423.

⁸ Lev. xiv. 31.

inquiry. For wherefore, when cleansing him by will and word, did He add also the touch of His hand? It seems to me for no other end, but that He may signify by this also, that He is not subject to the Law, but is set over it; and that to the clean from henceforth nothing is unclean*. For this cause, we see, Elisha did not so much as see Naaman, observing the strictness of the Law. Whereas the Lord, to signify that He heals not as a servant, but as absolute Master, doth also touch." Such, likewise, seems to be the opinion of St. Ambrose. Let us, therefore, take it in this manner also. He bore our sins indeed, yet Himself was without sin; and it may be that He touched him in order that in healing He might show He was Himself incapable of uncleanness; as also He mingled with publicans and sinners, legally unclean, in order that He might heal them, and show that He was Himself incapable of pollution: as also He appeared to break the Jewish Sabbath, being Himself the true Sabbath of the soul. "For His hand," says Chrysostom, "became not unclean from the leprosy, but the leprous body was rendered clean by His holy hand." But St. Cyril of Alexandria supposes that on this, as on other occasions of His touching those whom He healed, it was to show the union of His Divine and human nature, and the life-giving power that was in His Body thereby; that Christ was in these things working both Divinely and bodily. To will was of a human soul: but by that will to perform what He willed was of God: to touch was as of a human body; but by that touch to heal, was of God—was of "the Word made flesh." We may, indeed, very well combine all these significations, and consider that our Lord was therein as One Who had taken on Him our

* Titus i. 15.

leprous flesh, and bore away our uncleanness; as the scape-goat in life, or the lamb in death, bore the sins of the people: but again, as to that flesh He communicated His own holiness and Divinity; by His holiness He could touch without being polluted, by His Divinity through that touch He could heal and give new life.

"And He straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away" (Mark). And the subject of this solemn charge is mentioned by the Evangelists: *"And He charged him to tell no man"* (Luke). *"And Jesus"* (Matt.) *"saith unto him, See thou tell no man"* (Matt. Mark) *"any thing"* (Mark); *"but go, show thyself to the Priest, and offer"* (Matt. Mark, Luke) *"for thy cleansing"* (Mark, Luke) *"as"* (Luke) *"what things"* (Mark) *"the gift which"* (Matt.) *"Moses commanded," "for a testimony unto them"* (Matt. Mark, Luke). As a testimony to these unbelieving Priests and Pharisees; as a testimony unto them that He kept the Law; that the cure was complete; a testimony of His own power and Godhead. Though He knew they would neither repent nor believe, He brings before them this testimony; thus He says that His disciples shall be brought before kings, *"for a testimony unto them;"* and the Gospel shall be preached to all nations, *"for a testimony."* Leprosy was not only the strongest visible representation of sin, as the Law had marked it, but especially of the sin of sacrilege, as in Miriam, and in Gehazi, and in King Uzziah; these sacrilegious Priests themselves were full of this leprosy of heart, and He had come Who could heal them; for He was Himself the true sacrifice for leprosy and all uncleanness. By offering the things which Moses commanded, He makes them the judges of this cure; He sanctions in the individual the right mode of thanksgiving and giving glory to God; He shows

Himself as the only true sacrifice having power to do away sin ; and thus that He had come not to destroy the Law, but to fulfil it. Of this silence enjoined the leper so much has been said in other places¹, that nothing need here be added : but of the whole circumstance very much is comprised in the pregnant words of St. Hilary : " Silence is commanded, in order that such restoration might not so much be offered, as sought for. He is enjoined to show himself to the Priests, that He Who was foretold in the Law might be seen by His works ; and that the power of the Word might be understood in that in which the Law was weak. And he who was cleansed is to make the offering to God for the recovery of his health ; but that gift is not to consist merely of birds, but the man himself, purified from the filth of the body of sin, is to become a sacrifice to God ; since what Moses had commanded was not the cause, but the proof of his cure²."

To us this miracle stands out replete with Divine instruction, teaching us that although full of leprosy we may approach Christ, if it be with humiliation and reverence as God ; having a full and living faith in the power of Him Whose will performs all things ; and that then in obedience to Christ taking all the means which His Church has provided for our recovery, we may be again restored to the society of the faithful. And this we find in that prayer of him who is the pattern of all penitents ; for first of all alluding to some hidden power of God for purifying the soul, which was figured in this legal cleansing, he says, "Thou shalt purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean : Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow :" and then adds, "For Thou

¹ See Study of the Gospels, P. ii. Tracts for the Times, No. 80.

² Com. in Matt. cap. vii. 2.

desirest no sacrifice ; else would I give it Thee : . . . the sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit³." For the hyssop here spoken of, and washings, and sacrifices attended the ceremonial cleansing ; and David, the Prince of Penitents, saw by the Spirit that all these things had some unknown antitypes in the true cleansing of the soul.

Our Lord's injunction not to divulge it, does indeed for the time appear to be spoken in vain ; yet His Word shall not return to Him void, but perform its purpose ; and if in nothing else, yet in this, that even to this day it remains a witness to us, teaching us to avoid all vain-glory in works of charity ; which must be the wish and purpose of the heart, although indeed it may be true, that glory and honour will ever pursue those who flee from them ; and flee from those that anxiously pursue them. "*But he went out and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter : and they came to Him from every quarter*" (Mark). "*But so much the more went there a fame abroad of Him ; and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by Him of their infirmities*" (Luke), "*insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places*" (Mark). Perhaps this retirement may have continued at this time for some weeks, as very little is recorded sufficient to have occupied these two or three months previous to the second Passover. But St. Luke, as usual, introduces the occasion of His retirement. "*And He withdrew Himself into the wilderness, and prayed*" (Luke), setting before us the necessity of complete retirement and devotion, even in the midst of the most active and most important engagements of life.

³ Ps. li. 7. 16, 17.

SECTION XVIII

THE CURE OF THE PARALYTIC

"And again He entered into Capernaum after some days, and it was noised that He was in the house" (Mark). The expression "in the house" seems to indicate a house well known to the writer, as we soon afterwards have the very same expression applied by St. Matthew to his own house; and as it here occurs in St. Mark we may conclude it was the house of St. Peter. And indeed before the Sermon on the Mount we had our Lord spoken of as being in what appears the house of St. Peter, on healing his wife's mother, and on the following morning retiring very early into the wilderness to pray, so as to render it natural that He should be again returning from the wilderness to the same house. And St. Matthew even now speaks of Capernaum as "His own city," or the known place of His abode. The descriptiveness of the scene that follows in St. Mark still more clearly designates a well-known house, as if it were that of St. Peter. *"And immediately many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them; no not so much as about the door; and He preached the word unto them" (Mark).* The account in St. Luke might indeed have seemed to imply the house of a more distinguished person among them, than that of the poor fisherman, from the presence of the supercilious Pharisees and doctors of the Law; but as we find these persons long afterwards even in the house of Levi the Publican, nothing can be concluded from this. *"And it came to pass on a certain day, as He was teaching, that*

there were Pharisees and doctors of the Law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them" (Luke). "And behold" (Matt. Luke) "*there come unto Him*" (Mark) "*men*" (Luke) "*bringing to Him*" (Matt.) "*a man*" (Luke) "*sick of the palsy*" (Matt. Mark, Luke) "*laid*" (Matt.) "*on a bed*" (Matt. Luke), "*who was carried of four*" (Mark), "*and they sought means to bring him in and to lay him before Him*" (Luke), "*and when they could not approach Him*" (Mark), "*and found no way by which they might bring him in*" (Luke), "*because of the multitude*" (Mark, Luke), "*they went upon the house-top*" (Luke), on the flat roofs of the houses in that country which were so easy of access, and usual places of resort; and there they "*uncovered the roof where He was, and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed in which the sick of the palsy lay*" (Mark), "*they let him down through the tiling, with his couch, into the midst before Jesus*" (Luke), saying nothing, but making a more urgent appeal than any words could do, laying the sick man faint and helpless before Him.

"And Jesus" (Matt. Mark), "*when He saw their faith*" (Matt. Mark, Luke), "*said unto the sick of the palsy, Son*" (Matt. Mark), "*be of good cheer*" (Matt.). "*He said unto him, Man*" (Luke), "*thy sins are forgiven thee*" (Matt. Mark, Luke). "O wonderful humility," exclaims St. Jerome, "one despised and feeble, and entirely crippled in all his limbs, whom the Priests deigned not to approach, He addresses as 'Son:' even therefore His son, because his sins were forgiven⁴." As our Lord so often spoke and acted with regard to the hearts of those who approached Him; He probably saw that the forgiveness of

⁴ In Matt. ad loc.

his sins was that which lay nearest the heart of the afflicted man; and possibly his sins may have been such as to have produced palsy. But, however, the transaction stands out especially as the forgiveness of sins. Thus more and more does He unfold the nature of His Kingdom; first of all removing diseases; and then by degrees disclosing that forgiveness of sins which was in Him, and that atoning sacrifice by which these penalties of Adam's transgressions, and the forerunners and signs of death were removed. And here it is remarkable that, although the faith of the individual who was healed and forgiven, may be implied by his thus submitting to be carried, as St. Chrysostom and Theophylact observe, yet nothing is stated concerning it; on the contrary, it is said expressly, "Jesus on seeing *their* faith." And herein no doubt is contained another great mystery in the economy of Redemption; that not only do men's prayers avail for themselves, but for others also⁶; being made partakers in the mediatorial office of the great Intercessor; in faith and prayer co-operating with him in His Mediation. Thus are we bound together in the great living Body; as St. Paul says, "Ye also helping together by prayer for us⁶:" and as St. James, "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the Church; and let them pray over him . . . and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him⁷." Which seems to carry out this very case before us as a type of such intercessions in the Church; and indeed of all prayers for others: nor does it stand singly, for thus, in other instances, were persons healed by the prayers of others, as the servant of the Centurion, the daughter of Jairus, and the daughter of the

⁶ See Study of the Gospels, p. 244. ⁶ 2 Cor. i. 11. ⁷ Ch. v. 14. 15.

Canaanitish woman. Thus now do men bring the case of their friends who are laid perfectly helpless, and set them before Jesus: for many are in conditions in which they cannot help themselves, nor approach Christ, but depend on the aid of their friends; sick men so overwhelmed with diseases that they cannot pray, as in the palsy, when reason and speech are in an instant taken away; infant children, whose parents and natural guardians pray for them, and lay them helpless before Christ in Baptism: others that are paralysed in affection and will, and from long neglect cannot pray: all these have some who pray for them; and thus convey them, "borne of four," and lay them before Jesus. The number "four" ever signifies the world as acted on by the Church of God: by which they ascend, as the rivers of Eden that water the world, into the one fountain head which is in Paradise. Four, therefore, were the living creatures in Ezekiel: and four the Elders in the Revelation: and on four pillars the Ark was to be hung⁸; four-square was the Altar of Sacrifice, and the Altar of Incense, and the Table of Shewbread, and the Ark. Theophylact thus applies it to ourselves, when we, on attempting any thing good, are without strength, as a palsied man; yet thus raised by the four Evangelists and brought to Christ, we are accepted by Him as sons, and are able to leave our sins⁹. And St. Ambrose urges it as an encouragement, that when despairing of the pardon of heavy sins, we should thus get others and the Church to pray for us.

"And there were some of the Scribes sitting there" (Mark), *"and the Scribes and Pharisees began to reason, saying"* (Luke), yet it does not appear from the accounts that they said any thing, or gave vent to these their

⁸ Exod. xxvi. 32.

⁹ Aur. Cat. in Marc.

questionings among each other, but to have been thus murmuring secretly and in their own hearts; for St. Matthew says, "*And, behold, some of the Scribes said within themselves;*" and St. Mark still more distinctly, "*and reasoning in their hearts*" (Mark). "*This man blasphemeth*" (Matt.). "*Why doth this man?*" (Mark). "*Who is this man that*" (Luke) "*speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?*" (Mark, Luke;) "*and immediately*" (Mark) "*Jesus perceiving*" (Matt. Mark, Luke) "*in His Spirit*" (Mark) "*their thoughts*" (Matt.), "*their reasonings*" (Luke), "*that they thus reasoned within themselves*" (Mark), "*answered*" (Luke) "*and said unto them*" (Matt. Mark, Luke), "*Why reason ye*" (Mark, Luke) "*these things*" (Mark), "*why think ye evil things*" (Matt.) "*in your hearts?*" (Matt. Mark, Luke.) Thus they all specify particularly that it was in the secrecy of their hearts they were thus questioning evil, as thence arose incidentally a fresh proof of our Lord's Divinity, Who alone searcheth the reins, and understandeth the thoughts. "*For whether is it easier to say*" (to the sick of the palsy, Mark), "*Thy sins are forgiven thee, or to say, Arise*" (Matt. Mark, Luke), "*and take up thy bed*" (Mark) "*and walk? but that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins*" (Matt. Mark, Luke). You murmur at the mystery contained in these things, and that the power exerted before you is the forgiveness of sins, the manifestation of "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world;" but of visible effects you think more, and of the removal of diseases; let this manifestation therefore be your evidence. For although, as Theophylact observes, to remove diseases might be in itself more easy than to forgive sins, yet to their carnal eyes it appeared more difficult: and they ought to infer

that He Who could do the one had power over the other. Thus, as always, the evil of His enemies turns to His praise; through this their unbelief He both manifests Himself as knowing their thoughts, and shows His power of forgiving sins. And these their evil thoughts arise from their unbelief in Him as God, the source of all evil. They said that God only had power to forgive sins; by His answer He acknowledges it, but speaks of Himself as the Son of Man; thus indicating Himself to be perfect God and perfect Man. But as power is given unto Him as Man to execute judgment, so also as Man is power given unto Him to forgive sins. And thereby the Pharisees stood self-condemned by their very knowledge; for they confessed that He Who forgives sins must be God; they see that He manifests His power to forgive sins, yet believe in Him not as God. And thus they prepare the way for the consummation of their sin, when they condemn Him to death, because He was the Son of God, which they in unbelief called blasphemy. It may be observed that the two acts of Divine power, which they thus brought out, require the confirmation of each other: for He Who forgives sins ought to know the thoughts of the heart: He proves He knows their thoughts; He then proves He has power to forgive: "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings¹." From this necessary connexion it arises that in the Church Confession ever precedes Absolution. "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins;" the very words, as St. Ambrose notices, refer to the power given to His Ministers upon earth to forgive sins; "whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them." It is "the Son of

¹ Jer. xvii. 10

Man on earth" in His Church, the power flowing from the Head to His Ministers, by the union of the Divine and human nature. Thus, as God He says, "I am He that blotteth out thine iniquities²:" as He is Man it is said of Him, "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all³;" and "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world."

"Then saith He to the sick of the palsy" (Matt. Mark, Luke), "*I say unto thee*" (Mark, Luke), with great and marvellous efficacy, manifesting His Power and God-head, as Himself "the Resurrection and the Life," in Whom "whosoever believeth shall live though he were dead." "*Arise, and take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose*" (Matt. Mark, Luke) "*immediately*" (Mark, Luke) "*before them*" (Luke), "*and took up*" (Mark, Luke) "*the bed*" (Mark), "*that on which he lay*" (Luke), for it was a peculiar sort of bed, such as is easily transferred from place to place; "*and went out in the presence of them all*" (Mark), "*and departed unto his house*" (Matt. Luke), "*glorifying God*" (Luke). It is in some respects similar to the case soon after at the pool of Bethesda; in that the impotent man was commanded to "rise and take up" his "bed;" and the forgiveness of sins seems implied in the expression "sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee." "*And amazement seized them all*" (Luke), "*so that they were all amazed*" (Mark), "*and the multitude when they saw it marvelled*" (Matt.), "*and they glorified God*" (Matt. Mark, Luke), "*Who had given such power unto men*" (Matt.), "*and they were filled with fear*" (Luke), "*saying*" (Mark, Luke), "*We have seen strange things to-day*" (Luke), "*We never saw it on this fashion*" (Mark).

² Isa. xliii. 25.

³ Isa. liii. 6.

Although our great profit in reading these things arises from the particular and individual application in our own case by prayer and meditation ; yet the very power of thus applying the incident is greatly heightened by the vast spiritual meanings to which the analogy applies in the Church, which cannot be better expressed than by the following acceptance. "First of all," says St. Hilary, "He gives the remission of sins, and then the power of Resurrection ; and next, by the taking up of the bed, the removal of all infirmity and pain from our bodies ; and lastly, by the return to his own home, He shows the way restored to believers of returning to Paradise⁴." And of their marvelling and glorifying God, he says, it was not because God had such power, for He can do all things ; nor was it that He had given such power to a man, for it is spoken of many ; "glory is given to God for power given *unto men* ;—a way through His Word, both of remission of sins, and of the resurrection of bodies, and of returning to Heaven."

This miracle, moreover, seems to show that, until sins are forgiven, a man is paralysed, and incapable of exerting his will for good, but by the Absolution of the Church strength again returns to him : so important is the restoration of this discipline for the penitent, as brought by the Church to Christ, and craving the remission of sins. Until this is restored we must pray the more earnestly, "Spare, O Lord, all those who confess their sins unto Thee, that they, whose consciences by sin are accused, by Thy merciful pardon may be absolved ; through Christ our Lord."

⁴ Com. in Matt. cap. viii. 7.

SECTION XIX

THE CALLING OF ST. MATTHEW

It is clear, from the accounts of all three Evangelists, that it is not long after this cure of the paralytic that Levi is seen at the receipt of custom by the lake, and called ; more particularly does this appear from his own narrative ; for St. Matthew connects it with the preceding occurrence, by proceeding thus, "and passing by from thence He saw a man : " and St. Luke prefaces it by saying, "after these things He went out : " and St. Mark, that "He went out again by the sea-side : " all which seem to connect it with the last-mentioned transaction. This call of St. Matthew closes the account of all the memoirs of this year : although it might appear, at first sight, that other things arose in a continued narrative out of this circumstance. And indeed the order of events which ensue after this call of St. Matthew is very remarkable : for the arrangement of the narrative, which seems alone capable of being supported in a Harmony, and which closes the year at this point, differs from that of all the three Gospels ; for they all here introduce the memorable feast at the house of Levi, which does not appear to have taken place till six months later. The reason of this seems to be, in the case of St. Matthew, that he is following the order of association, not of time, as his custom is ; for in speaking of himself he immediately introduces a remarkable feast that took place in his own house in the following year—using the words "*in the house,*" as he naturally would in speaking of his own house. And the other two seem in this remarkable

instance to have followed the order of St. Matthew : indeed, St. Mark does so at other times, when it clearly is not the order of events. But that the feast did occur at a later period is evident from this, that it is immediately connected, in St. Matthew's own account, with the summons to the house of Jairus ; for it was "while He spake these things" at that feast that the Ruler came with his entreaty. And it appears, both from St. Mark and from St. Luke, that this raising of Jairus's daughter took place on Christ's return from Gadara. But now we have already seen, from the three consistent accounts, that the call of Levi takes place immediately after the healing of the paralytic ; and the disarrangement, so to speak, of the continuous occurrences arises from this, that the events, even here, and previous to this, are in St. Matthew introduced not in the order of time, but of association : for this case of the paralytic he introduces on our Lord's returning to Capernaum, not, as it appears to have been, in the first year of His returning from the wilderness, but on His returning here the next year from Gadara ; at which time, as we have seen, the feast at his house did in fact take place. But although the thread appears so complicated, the order, by a full comparison of all things, is capable of a clear and satisfactory arrangement.

This call of St. Matthew stands out prominently and singly in the narrative : yet one cannot but suppose that there may be very much of a latent history of himself under all this concise mention of events ; we may conclude this from the analogy of Scripture and the Divine dealings, and from the other disciples which appear to have been thus suddenly called in these Gospels, as if seeing our Lord for the first time ; for we might have supposed that it was so in their case, had it not been for,

as it were accidental, memoirs of St. John, from which they appear to have been long trained previously, and habituated to know the Christ both by words and works. Although, of course, it is possible that no intercourse may have taken place between our Lord and St. Matthew, humanly speaking; yet still, if St. Matthew had heard His words and seen His miracles, although himself unnoticed in the crowd; and if, in all the workings of his own heart in consequence, Jesus Christ was present and conversed with his thoughts, it will fully explain to us how a call that appears to us so suddenly made and answered, may yet not have been sudden, and only according to the usual dealings of God, from Whom are "the preparations of the heart," and with Whom is "the disposing" of "the lot." St. Chrysostom supposes that what had already taken place in our Lord's ministry had prepared his heart to obedience, and so does St. Jerome also. But the latter likewise supposes that there may have been some miraculous and Divine attraction in the hidden Godhead of our Lord, beaming forth from His human countenance, and drawing unto Himself those whom He called.

The account is as follows after the restoration of the sick of the palsy. "*And after these things He went out*" (Luke). "*He went out again by the sea-side, and all the multitude came unto Him, and He taught them: and as He passed—*" (Mark) going by the place where the seat of custom was, which gathered tolls from those that trafficked on the lake, being, as Maldonatus supposes, not in the house of the Publican, but a place on the shore. But this Evangelist still more as it were incidentally introduces the account of himself, "*And Jesus, passing forth from thence, saw a man named Matthew.*" (Matt.) He alone, as St. Jerome observes, gives himself this less honourable

appellation, as if in this degraded employment he were no more worthy of the name of an Israelite. St. Luke says, "*And He saw a Publican named Levi;*" and St. Mark, "*He saw Levi, the son of Alphæus—*" for thus St. Peter would naturally designate a neighbour residing in the same town, by his father's name—"sitting at the receipt of custom" (Matt. Mark, Luke). "*And He said unto Him, Follow Me*" (Matt. Mark, Luke.) "*And He left all things*" (Luke), "*and rose up, and followed Him*" (Matt. Mark, Luke). Most beautiful and blessed words, that may well close a volume, and the First Year of this Ministry! Well, indeed, might they of old, on hearing such words, feel their hearts burn within them, and a fire kindled in their bosoms which wasted them day and night, till they too had "left all and rose up and followed Him." While we in barren wonder or unconcerned amazement see them on their heavenly road, like shadows in a dream, to which we stretch out our longing hands, but without that substance and life by which faith gives to such thoughts a reality; and our hands are still empty, and we in the same place as ever. Yet how many since that time have read all these things, and received them into their secret heart? O Thou Who didst cast out the evil spirit,—Who didst heal the leper by Thy word,—Who didst forgive sins, and restore the palsied man to life and resurrection by Thy Word,—Who so often in passing by hast called me! cast out every evil spirit from within me,—touch my uncleanness with Thine own life-giving Body,—give strength to my palsied limbs, that I may "leave all things, and rise up and follow Thee:" and that I miss not the way, give me, above all things, the spirit of this humble and meek Publican; or of that other, if it be another, who said, 'Ο Θεός, ἰλάσθητί μοι τῷ ἁμαρτωλῷ.

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